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The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy

1949—1975

edited and with an introduction by Carol Brightman

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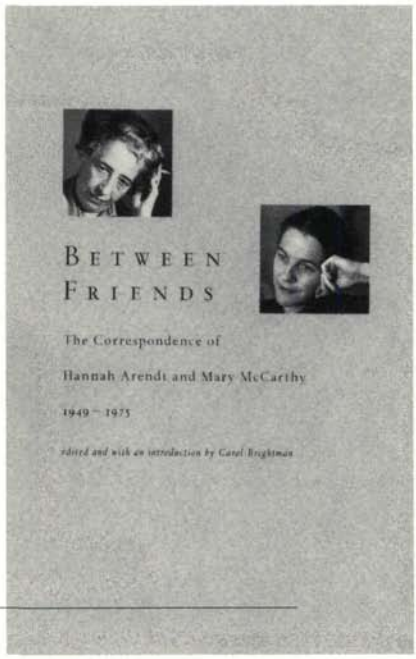

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Comment

HANNAH AND MARY The correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, during their long intellectual and personal friendship, is a mixed bag – full of contradictions and inconsistences. Both were formidable women, but the letters also reveal their softer sides. They have their high moments and their low ones; sometimes they are extremely perceptive, sometimes they are blind. Sometimes they are shrewd, sometimes unseeing, especially about people; sometimes exhibiting mature feelings, sometimes gushy.

There is also something strange in the girlish romantic tone of these letters by the two heavyweights – like a romantic love affair between two kids. There are countless exclamations of "dearest," "dear, I love you," "I miss you, I wish I could see you and talk to you." Also odd are the frequent rambling perorations about lofty psychological and human questions that frankly sound amateurish, particularly coming from a highly trained student of philosophy like Hannah Arendt. Maybe it is more excusable in McCarthy, who speculates in a manner one can relate to the free-wheeling associations of a literary mind.

On the positive side are the many sharp observations of people, even of people they liked. They were quite soft on those who were part of their closed circle, like Dwight Macdonald and Nicola Chiaromonte, but they were not totally uncritical of them. Also on the positive side are their literary and intellectual judgments, except – and this, I suppose, is normal – where they are weighted for and against by personal likes and biases.

The letters contain in addition criticisms and corrections of each other's writing. Mary points out Hannah's mistakes. Hannah comments on Mary's work. Whatever the occasional criticisms, they are always admiring of each other. There are also long accounts of personal doings and affairs. Mary's divorce from Bowden Broadwater and James West's divorce from his wife take up many pages in blow-by-blow narratives. And Hannah's daily activities take up much space. There is endless talk of health, illness, and travel arrangements.

On the questionable side are their politics, which are more wildly left and anti-anticommunist than I recall. Both of them were opposed to Vietnam, as were many people. But Hannah and Mary were opposed on moral and political grounds. Mary went so far as to favor a Communist

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Editor's Note: *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, 1949-1975,* edited and with an Introduction by Carol Brightman, has been published by Harcourt Brace & Co.

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victory. She even revealed at one point that one of the North Vietnam leaders said to her that he was disappointed in the lack of large anti-Vietnam demonstrations in America, because the Communists counted on them to help their cause. On the other hand, both Hannah and Mary were definitely anti-Soviet, yet they apparently saw no connection between Russian and North Vietnamese Communism. As I read Hannah and Mary's passionate letters favoring the Vietnamese, I could not help thinking what a remarkably free country America is. Many other countries would have regarded support of the enemy as acts of treason. Even Ezra Pound escaped the charge of treason in America by being judged to be insane.

There are other bits of political folly. Both women exaggerated the meaning and consequences of Watergate. They thought that we were on the verge of a dictatorship, either led by Nixon or as a result of Watergate. They also went overboard for McGovern, who, after all, was little more than a preview of Dukakis. And they thought some kind of fascism would emerge from the pursuit of the war in Vietnam. They wrote constantly about how awful America had become. And Arendt even entertained the idea of moving to Switzerland.

But Arendt's and McCarthy's naive support of extremist views and causes should not obscure the vivid picture in these letters of literary and intellectual life in a good part of this century, as seen through the eyes of two highly talented figures at the heights of their professions. And one must admire the energy, the exuberance, the range of these two veterans of the literary world: Mary's letters, sometimes hasty, are always in impeccable prose, and Hannah's are powerfully written.

In them, we get glimpses of Robert Lowell in some of his mad moments, of Edmund Wilson, Clement Greenberg, Elizabeth Hardwick, Saul Bellow, Stephen Spender, Natasha Spender, Isaiah Berlin, Hans Morgenthau, Karl Jaspers, Nathalie Sarraute, Diana Trilling, Vladimir Nabokov, Robert Oppenheimer, Sonia Orwell, Roger Straus, Robert Silvers, William Jovanovich, Jason Epstein, Barbara Epstein, Lionel Abel, Philip Rahv, and a number of less well-known people. Hannah comments on Harold Rosenberg's ego and arthritis. There is a sad picture of Heidegger, Hannah's former teacher and lover, as an old, deaf, feeble man. She saw him briefly in Freiburg towards the end of his life. And Arendt paints a touching picture of Auden, broken-down and drunk, when, not long before he died, he asked her to marry him. There are fuller portraits of Dwight Macdonald and Nicola Chiaromonte.

There are a number of angry and indignant letters by both women about the widespread criticism of Arendt's book on the Eichmann trial, *The Banality of Evil*. Most of the criticism centered on Arendt's critical

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account of the cooperation of the Jewish Councils with the Nazis. But Hannah insisted she was simply reporting what she considered to be the truth, and she and Mary thought the Jewish community was ganging up on her and her book. Hannah also vaguely suggested the possibility of a conspiracy behind some of the adverse criticism of her.

The impact of these letters is large and puzzling. The enormous swings from the highs to lows of thinking raise the question of why Western thought is generally so full of contradictions. Why, one has to ask, do we find so much intelligence combined with so much foolishness? There are no easy answers. Perhaps the only answer is that this is the nature of our tradition. But then one wonders whether this is not just a tautology – like saying the minds of intellectuals shuttle between the mountains and the valleys because they shuttle between them.

I might add that, despite my growing differences with Hannah and Mary, I have many sympathetic memories of them. For they were, from the beginning, though somewhat peripherally, part of what Norman Podhoretz has called "the family."

The lengthy introduction by Carol Brightman, McCarthy's biographer, is a warm and affectionate tribute to these two strong-willed women who became intellectual celebrities.

W. P.

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ROBERT WISTRICH

Nationalism Reborn

The demise of Communism and the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 presented Europe with a golden opportunity to unite and become a great stabilizing force in the world today. Across the Continent, from East to West, a new consensus had emerged in favor of democracy, pluralism, human rights and the rule of law. For a brief, euphoric moment there was a high tide in favor of the idea of European integration, the hope that a common European purpose might yet assert itself beyond the selfish interests of the individual nation-states. With the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the common ideals of peace, security, freedom, and prosperity suddenly seemed within reach of millions in the eastern half of the Continent who had been denied this promise. Yet only four years later, the idea of Europe is floundering in both East and West.

Let me quote the perceptive words of Czechoslovakia's President Vaclav Havel, in an address to the Council of Europe: "Europe today lacks an ethos; it lacks imagination, it lacks generosity, it lacks the ability to see beyond the horizon of its own particular interests, be they partisan or otherwise, and to resist the pressure from various lobbying groups. There is no real identification in Europe with the meaning and purpose of integration." Instead of a new dawn, we are seeing before our eyes how in the whole of the former Yugoslavia an internationally recognized multinational state has been subdivided according to the dictates of fanatical warlords. To quote Haval again: "We talk and talk, we drown in compromises, we redraw the maps, we read the lips of the ethnic cleansers, and, with increasingly serious consequences, we forget the fundamental values upon which we would like to shape the future of our continent." In its first great test since the end of the Cold War, Europe seems not only to have failed miserably but to be opening its back door to the demons of nationalist collectivism.

A new specter is haunting not only former Yugoslavia but all of post-totalitarian Europe: the sanctification of the "ethnically pure state." The quest for self-determination, in itself a noble and irreproachable ideal, is beginning to threaten the integrity of individual states, the inviolability of their borders and even the validity of all postwar treaties. The bloody ethnic, tribal, and religious warfare in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, the Balkans, and Northern Ireland has produced the

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nightmare of controlling ethnic groups and aggressive majorities or minorities seeking to eliminate other groups.

The new ethnic nationalism proclaims, as in ex-Yugoslavia, that people are born with ethnic identities which they can never change – you are a Serb, a Croat, or an Albanian because your father was one before you. This primary identity is a reaction to the leveling and homogenizing tendencies of modernity and, in the case of ex-Communist states, a reaction against the totalitarian experience. But the erasure of the Soviet past has not brought with it a true sense of unity, freedom, or the mutual recognition of self-determination by the ethnically mixed populations of Eastern or Southeastern Europe. We are witnessing there, at one and the same time, a post-Communist predicament and a throwback to the prewar past, whether in the Baltic States, Transcaucasia, Slovakia, Romania, Hungary or ex-Yugoslavia; a return to history, against a modern backdrop of decentralization and fragmentation, instead of against the monstrously tyrannical unity and centralization which characterized the Fascist and Communist experiments.

Today, in the former Soviet Russian Empire, in the Balkans and Eastern Europe, neither military force, state terror, nor Marxist-Leninist ideology can hold the center. What has happened since 1989 recalls in many ways the centrifugal forces that disintegrated four empires in 1918 – that of the Romanovs in Tsarist Russia, the Ottoman Turks in the Middle East, the Hapsburg dynasty in Austria-Hungary, and the Hohenzollerns in Imperial Germany.

It was war and revolution which brought down these multi-ethnic empires in the maelstrom events of 1917-18. In the name of national self-determination, East-Central Europe after 1918 was to be made safe for Western-style democracy. But the new map of Europe which restored Poland, reduced Germany, Austria and Hungary, enlarged Romania, and created new states in the Baltic region, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, did not result in peace. The multinational empires became multi-ethnic states masquerading as homogeneous nation-states, discriminating against their ethnic minorities. Worse still, they rapidly became, with the exception of Czechoslovakia, authoritarian and quasi-fascist states. Their fate was to be sandwiched between a revanchist Germany – embittered by the Versailles Treaty – and a Communist Russia driven by a messianic ideology of revolutionary expansion. Neither Britain nor France was strong enough in the interwar period to guarantee the independence of Eastern Europe against the pressure of such powerful neighbors, themselves in the grip of Nazism and Stalinism.

Since 1989, as East-Central Europe has struggled painfully to make the transition to market capitalism and pluralist democracy, the echoes of

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this past still haunt the present. Just as the fiction of *Homo Sovieticus* has given way in the ex-USSR to the primary ethnic identities of Russians, Ukrainians, Balts, Georgians or Armenians, so too, the Yugoslav identity has been erased in favor of Croat or Serb nationality.

Ex-Czechoslovakia has split into Czech and Slovak republics, while in Slovakia itself there has been a revival of the interwar intolerance towards Hungarians, Gypsies, and Jews. There have been moves to rehabilitate its wartime clerico-fascist leader, Monsignor Tiso, who collaborated with the Germans in the genocide of Slovakia's Jewish population. Similarly, in Romania, there is a renewed cult of the wartime fascist dictator and Hitler ally, Marshal Antonescu, and to some extent of the prewar Iron Guard, whose mystical, religious nationalism had such devastating consequences. The downfall of the Communist dictator Ceaucescu has not prevented Romania from pursuing the harassment of Hungarians in Transylvania, of the large Gypsy minority, or from renewing the anti-Semitic traditions of the interwar period. As in other East European countries, Jews find themselves retrospectively scapegoated by the nationalist press for all the evils of postwar Communist misrule. The xenophobic, populist discourse of the authoritarian nationalists with its paranoid hatred of ethnic minorities, Gypsies (surely, the pariah people of Eastern Europe today), and Jews is the darker face of the return to the past. In countries like Romania, Slovakia, and Croatia it has been further nourished by the return of virulently anti-Communist exiles from the Western diasporas, where their prewar ideology remained frozen in a strangely distorted time-warp. Even the more economically successful, nationally homogeneous and self-confident nations like Poland and Hungary are not free of this misplaced nostalgia for an authoritarian, ethnocentric nationalism.

The reassertion of national consciousness in East-Central or Southeastern Europe is not surprising when set against the effects of four decades of virtual slavery and an economic deprivation whose end is not yet in sight. The Communist repression of the national past and of cherished religious symbols was bound to produce some kind of backlash, as was the disappointment of exaggerated expectations that there would be a rapid rise in the standard of living. But Western and Central Europe are also experiencing, from a very different starting-point, the reemergence of the politics of an authoritarian right. While incomparably more affluent, Western societies are far from basking in the prosperous, contented boredom imagined by visionaries of a global Common Market. The effects of recession, of significantly high unemployment and homelessness, of urban decay and rootlessness, not to mention a growing anomie and moral confusion, have created a new reservoir for the illib-

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eral politics of the radical right. Disaffection with established parties and elected politicians is rife, calling into question the liberal democratic consensus and encouraging a powerful challenge from those national-populist movements which voice the discontent from below. The Front National of Jean-Marie Le Pen in France, the Republikaner in Germany, the increasingly successful Freedom Party in Austria under the photogenic Jörg Haider, the Lombard League and the neo-fascists in the Italian government, and the Vlaams Blok in Belgium all express in their different ways the present crisis of confidence. While in Russia, the ultra-nationalism of Vladimir Zhirinovsky casts a huge shadow over that country's future.

The most visible target of the new populist politics has been the influx of immigrants and asylum-seekers from the Third World, or more recently from Eastern and Southeast Europe, into the European community. Almost every Western industrial society in the past two decades has to some extent become multi-ethnic, with significant minority communities in most of its major cities. This has exacerbated fears and anxieties about law and order, jobs, housing and education, not to mention the more irrational reflexes aroused by differences of culture, religion and race. In France, Germany, Britain, Italy, Austria, Belgium, and parts of East Europe, it has led to a resurgence of radically motivated violence and resentment against the very existence of a multi-ethnic society. Opinion polls over the past few years across the European continent consistently show high levels of prejudice towards immigrants, foreign workers, asylum-seekers, refugees, and Gypsies. In France, the main targets are Arabs from the Maghreb and to a lesser extent Africans; in Germany they are Turks; in Britain, Asians (especially Pakistanis), and Afro-Caribbean people; in Italy they are primarily Africans; in Austria they tend to be Slavs; and in Eastern Europe, Gypsies are a specially favored scapegoat. Alongside this general xenophobia there is also some anti-Semitism – less intense than it used to be in the prewar period – but still ideologically central to the agenda of the far right.

The new populism and its leaders (most of them fairly articulate and intent on maintaining a respectable façade) abide by the democratic rules of the game in playing to the xenophobic gallery. Their slogans of "Germany for the Germans," "France for the French," "Austria for the Austrians" or "Russia for the Russians" offer simplistic, reassuring answers for these beleaguered citizens who feel abandoned, lost or betrayed by the established parties; and for all those who feel angry at the influx of foreigners which has changed the character of their local habitat. Sometimes, as in Italy, it is not so much against foreigners but fellow citizens – in this case Southern Italians – that the xenophobic stereotypes are directed. The more prosperous Italians of the North, disgusted by the

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political corruption of the establishment in Rome, flock to the populist Lombard League. In West Germany, alongside the backlash against immigrants and guest-workers, there is unexpectedly deep resentment towards East Germans, blamed for the costs of unification and a temporary decline in the standard of living.

The populist demagogues flourish, as always, in a climate of fear – fear of unemployment and recession, fear of the alien and different, fear for the future. In France, Le Pen's Front National has consistently won between twelve and fourteen percent of the vote in regional, cantonal, and national elections. With 60,000 members and 239 regional councillors (out of a total of 1,829), with strong bases in Province, Alpes, Côte d'Azur and Ile de France, the radical right in France is solidly implanted. Its campaign against immigration has played no small role in bringing the present French government of the conservative right to adopt draconian legislation whose declared aim is zero-immigration in what was traditionally Europe's most hospitable country.

In Germany, the Republikaner did not do well in the recent national elections, due to internal divisions, but they have a potential support base of around ten percent of the electorate. The pressure of the radical right forced the German government to drastically modify its liberal asylum laws. In Austria, Jörg Haider's Freedom Party enjoys the support of nearly twenty-five percent of the electorate and is threatening to replace the Conservatives as the second largest party. Its rhetoric about the threat of *Umvolkung* (ethnic transformation) resulting from further immigration from the South or East is redolent of the vocabulary of the Third Reich. In Belgium, too, the far-right Vlaams Block, which adopts an extreme anti-immigrant stance, is well-positioned. In Antwerp in 1991 it won twenty-five percent of the vote in the last general elections and this could increase the next time around. Significantly, as in some other European countries, the populist right is openly supported by neo-Nazi groups.

It is tempting to dismiss the neo-Nazi movements and violent skinhead gangs who have envenomed race relations in Europe in recent years as politically insignificant in view of their small size, their lack of leadership, coherent organization or ideology. Apart from Germany, their numbers are small in most individual European countries (they are generally in the age fourteen to twenty-five group) – and they have no influence on electoral politics. But the wave of racist violence in Germany in the last few years – with brutal attacks on Turks, Third World immigrants, handicapped people, as well as the desecration of Jewish cemeteries and Holocaust sites – has been a chilling reminder of the fascist potential still lurking in the lower depths of European society. In 1992

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alone, there were over two thousand racist attacks (nearly double the previous year), over six hundred cases of arson, and seventeen deaths caused by neo-Nazi skinheads in Germany. Their message of hate is relayed through a skinhead music scene (a pattern pioneered by racist rock bands in Britain) and computer games as well as racist literature. The denial of the Holocaust is a consistent feature of their propaganda, as it is of equivalent neo-Nazi groups in Britain, France, Italy, and other European countries. The light penalties given by German courts for their criminal activities and the relative passivity of the government and police (somewhat corrected in recent months) suggests more than an echo of Weimar. The ill-fated Republic was notoriously blind in the right eye, when it came to responding to extremist violence from the right. Historical analogies can be misleading, but many Germans themselves draw the parallel with late Weimar conditions. These parallels are even more striking when we look at Russia where a devastated economy, national humiliation, and a crisis of identity make some version of fascism a growing temptation. Similarly, in what was formerly East Germany, which knew only Nazi and Communist dictatorship between 1933 and 1989, the prognosis is not encouraging.

Not only have the so-called "Ossies" been living in an ideological vacuum since 1989, but they have seen their industrial base and collective self-esteem progressively eroded. But the fact is that there are even more organized neo-Nazis in Western Germany, which until recently never had it so good. Hitler's great-grandchildren (if that is who they are) are no less the products of an economic miracle shaped by the Bonn Republic than the misfits of Communist totalitarianism. Moreover, at its core the resurgence of nationalist xenophobia, with its echoes of a genocidal past, is much more than simply a German problem.

We are dealing here with a general European and perhaps even a planetary malaise, involving a fundamental breakdown in moral and societal values. The ghosts of Europe's past will not be exorcised by the facile search for scapegoats in the present nor by futile exercises in normalizing the collective traumas of history. The search for roots and for a secure national identity can often be liberating experiences – especially in the service of freedom from tyranny, oppression, and humiliation. But even the noblest patriotic sentiments are liable to become the "last refuge of the scoundrel" unless they are also balanced by an elementary respect for dignity, solidarity, and universal human rights.

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EDITH KURZWEIL

Feminists and Freudians

Psychoanalysis and feminism have had an ambivalent relationship almost from the beginning, when Freud began to develop his theories in order to cure women suffering from hysterical symptoms, and then went on to try emancipating other women as well. Subsequently, the two movements, together or in opposition, were among the most dynamic mainsprings of modern society. But as their theoretical underpinnings shifted in response to intellectual questions, and their communities were clamoring for political guidance, they evolved in line with specific intellectual and feminist prerogatives which themselves were responses to their milieus.

The speculative nature of psychoanalysis itself legitimates its proponents' and opponents' flights of fancy, the confusions between reality and fantasy, and between scientific and therapeutic explanations of psychological phenomena. The political nature of feminism justifies the often hyperbolic calls for active involvement and the consequent exaggerations of women's psychological dilemmas and suffering in order to score points and achieve political ends. Hence psychoanalysis and feminism function in different spheres. But psychoanalytic views by a few women have given feminism inordinate boosts, when their insights into psychic mechanisms have freed women to compete in political arenas. Feminist advances, however, have not directly bolstered the psychoanalytic movement. The two activities have grown up like a pair of Siamese twins, unable to exist apart from each other for long – progressing, regressing or treading water almost in tandem. But like mountain springs they have descended where they best could dig in to turn into powerful streams – embedding themselves and changing directions depending upon the terrain. Consequently, cultural circumstances in America, in France and Germany, as well as in other countries, not only have allowed Freud's followers to pursue and elaborate different theoretical and clinical paths but to infuse these with local and parochial assumptions, and to reinvigorate debates that had turned unnecessarily stale.

Editor's Note: This essay is an adaptation of the Introduction to the forthcoming book, *Feminists and Freudians* by Edith Kurzweil, to be published by Westview Press.

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Because psychoanalysis is one of the central ideas that changed the thinking of our century (the others are Marxism and Darwinism), psychoanalysts everywhere kept extending and revising their theories of drives and narcissism, and of personality structure and object relations, in the hope of creating a radically better world that would help free individuals from their unconscious conflicts. This, of course, was a large claim. But because, for instance, the innovative and outrageous French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan, and the socially conscious German psychoanalyst, Alexander Mitscherlich, were addressing their own constitutencies, psychoanalysis in France and Germany played different roles and emphasized other than our taken-for-granted "American ego psychology" – that is, the centrality of Freud's structural theory of id, ego and superego.

Feminists' demands for equal rights with men in all economic, political, social, and personal spheres usually have been boosted by insights from Freudian theories, though not always directly. Complexities abound: from its inception, psychoanalysis has been therapy, theory, philosophy, and metapsychology all at once. Progress in each of these areas inevitably meant that all the other areas had to be recast, so that psychoanalysts had to function in a theoretical state of flux. Feminists have had to navigate in male cultures, to challenge specific discriminatory habits, and to break down the boundaries of sexual domination by the men they lived with, or decided to abandon. These men themselves were brought up in the political order other men had created. Thus, to further women's freedom feminists and most psychoanalysts had to deal with and rethink the philosophies that were in vogue and to build on the realistic (legal) options open, or about to open, to women. Only by adapting their thinking and ideals to existing institutions could they promote their ends. For instance, the women who in 1907 had to contend with Fritz Wittels's argument that women's psychic makeup prevented them from turning into competent physicians could not possibly envision the debate over the advantage of women obstetricians over males that would rage in the 1970s and 1980s. Freud sided against Wittels, but the *Zeitgeist* did not allow for as strong a rebuttal as contemporary Freudians might advance. Yet then and since then women have faced the cultural and interest-based resistance to equality that was founded, at least partly, on the fact that women always (or at least for some time to come) are the ones to bear children. To the extent that women too had internalized these attitudes, they revealed their Janus-faced existences.

All along, both feminists and psychoanalysts have addressed sexual differences, but the ways in which they expected to resolve, minimize, or

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disregard these have reflected not only their professional training or political aims, but their concrete ambience. Sometimes, they concentrated on personal or social therapies; at other times, they advanced political solutions; at yet other times, they assumed that better collaboration by sociologists and psychoanalysts might penetrate to the core of the individual's psyche in order to pinpoint when and how infants' social experiences determine their future lives.

Neither feminism nor psychoanalysis can be separated from their immediate surroundings. But the modern conditions that inaugurated tourism encouraged also the tourism of ideas. Hence during the last decade we have been exposed to all sorts of new feminist theories, and elaborations on these, that were being adapted from earlier French formulations. In recent years, these have found their niche in American universities – along with so-called postmodernism. Because these endeavors have not been beneficial to the majority of women, I would argue that the straightforward feminism of the First Wave which, among other things, led to the passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 boosted women's liberation and altered the fabric of American society; and that the complicated and abstruse theories of the Second Wave have become increasingly marginal to the practical and complex problems facing both liberated and not-so-liberated women in their everyday lives. In other words, I hold that ideas transposed from Paris to Johns Hopkins or Yale, like African masks displayed in museums – even though interesting in themselves and inspiring artistic works – are artifacts that cannot become intrinsic to American society, even though they may enhance the reputations of their discoverers.

Postmodernist theories do not allow for closure. They are hard to assess, because they are so intricately mixed in with a congeries of linguistic and cultural assumptions that are said to deal with both conscious and unconscious matters; and that do not allow for closure. When we add to these complications the relativism and subjectivism that are at the heart of postmodernism and the myriads of political ends postmodern theories are expected to serve, or at least to explain, the complexities seem insuperable and further muddle the problems they set out to solve. But after Elaine Marx and Isabelle de Courtivron, in 1980, brought out (partial) translations of French feminists' responses to Lacan during the 1960s and 1970s, some American feminists incorporated their innovative *tournures de phrases* – which subsumed many premises of and responses to existentialism and "French structuralism."

The early women analysts around Freud, such as Karen Horney, Helene Deutsch, Melanie Klein, Sabina Spielrein, tried to come to terms with their own neuroses and soon were caught up in the clinical and

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theoretical means to liberate women. And as they were mining their own and their patients' unconscious, they turned into respected professionals. While attempting to answer Freud's query, "What does woman want?" they functioned on the levels of their male colleagues.

Ever since then, feminists sooner or later would reappraise the psychoanalytic feminism of the 1920s. Then as now, theoretical constructions as well as the symbiotic and ambivalent relationship between Freudians and feminists were evident: they alternated between standing shoulder to shoulder and facing each other across an unbridgeable abyss. Then too, their associations and dissociations, like weather vanes, were subject to political winds, to the prestige each group happened to enjoy at the specific moment, and to viable, local and institutional alliances and divisions. After all, Freud envisioned a heretofore unimaginable human liberation – by providing yet another dimension to the Marxist vision. Freud's early women disciples were attracted to psychoanalysis because they expected to hasten the progress of the women's liberation they already were championing, albeit from a variety of perspectives.

Actually, *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, and later on Berlin, were hotbeds of cultural and political radicalism. Feminism, psychoanalysis, and a variety of socialist policies were feeding each other: heated arguments among intellectuals were not about the viability of any of these movements but about how to attain their ends – as quickly and painlessly as possible. To that purpose, Freudians explored the ways in which biological factors and psychic development influence women's roles and behaviour, their place in family and society, and the effect the repressive conditions of their lives may exert on their bodies – either in terms of the evolution of the human species or in terms of personal growth. Already then, psychoanalysts argued violently about the relevance of Freud's concepts: Did "penis envy" consign women – possibly irrevocably – to an inferior role? Does the little girl's sexual development really parallel the little boy's? How absolute are the psychic consequences of the separation of the sexes? Karen Horney was the first woman to challenge Freud on the fate of the Oedipus complex; Helene Deutsch did so in a much milder form; and Melanie Klein focussd on the impact of the mother on her newborn infant.

Freud's analysands Marie Bonaparte and Eugenia Sokolnicka started the psychoanalytic movement in France, and Sabina Spielrein advanced it in Russia. These endeavors certainly indicate that psychoanalysis treated women as equals, even if not all psychoanalysts did so. After Freud's death, two women, Melanie Klein and Anna Freud, ended up vying for the leadership of the world-wide movement.

Even though all of Freud's early disciples attempted to understand

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the roots and development of the female psyche, the women's contributions provoked the sharpest verbal and written exchanges and speculations: they led Freud to suggest to women, by 1932, that to "know more about femininity, enquire from your own experiences of life, or turn to the poets, or wait until science can give you deeper and more coherent information." By then, he and the disciples (artists, writers, psychologists, teachers, as well as doctors) had been reconsidering some of the theories in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), and in the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905). In general, their psychoanalytic investigations helped introduce non-authoritarian pedagogical methods by teachers (primarily in Adlerian versions) in nearly every one of Vienna's private and public schools and provided strong support to the Social Democratic forces in government as well.

It is generally ignored that after Freud's women psycholoanalysts moved away from the European continent, they were more concerned with understanding their new culture and the English language than with feminism. But they all thought of themselves as practicing feminists. In America, they joined existing psychoanalytic organizations; and (except for Melanie Klein in London) they researched and expanded the methods of training and therapy that followed from Freud's structural model. Because the native American psychoanalysts were expected to have medical degrees, those Europeans, and the women among them who were doctors, soon enjoyed exalted professional recognition. Indeed, the women helped develop the ego psychological theories which after 1945 would sweep Europe as well, and the many so-called deviant theories by the non-medical Freudian emigrés. Horney once more set the example. She "defected" from the New York Psychoanalytic Association because she considered ego psychology too narrow, and she advocated therapeutic methods that focused on her patients' present lives in order to understand their past rather than the other way around. Her defiance of institutional authority and her ability to stand her ground, however, evoked the image of the super-liberated woman. Helene Deutsch's books about the differentiation between motherhood and motherliness were widely debated in the late 1940s. Although in the culture at large feminism was not a priority at the time, the women psychoanalysts' contributions to the war effort and to views on the socialization of children were qualitatively and quantitatively equal to that of their male colleagues. Thus, when feminism again came to the fore, these women would be held up as examples.

After psychoanalysis entered the mainstream during World War II it was responsible, at least indirectly, for the explosion of all sorts of other therapies, and for the therapeutic society we currently inhabit. For soci-

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ologists such as Talcott Parsons (and those he trained at Harvard's new Department of Social Relations) cooperated with leading psychoanalysts to better understand human motivation and social formation and, in the process, further helped establish the therapeutic climate which, in turn, looked to the psychoanalysts as gurus.

In the 1950s families happily moved to the suburbs. But by 1963 Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* struck a chord in middle- and working-class women who were suffering from suburban domesticity – which Freudian psychoanalysts allegedly had been supporting. By the late 1960s, some of these women spearheaded the feminist movement on the heels of the civil rights movement. Although at first it (wrongly) blamed psychoanalysis as the culprit who spawned patriarchy and with it the earlier quiescence of women, by 1973 women psychoanalysts, psychologists and writers began to demonstrate that the women's movement could benefit from the thought of Horney, Deutsch and Klein, as well as from that by the younger women who were linking psychoanalytic ideas to hormonal, chromosomal and embryological research, to psychological studies of traits, of bisexuality, and so on. New avenues for investigation opened up into the genesis of femaleness, gender roles and all sorts of cultural influences. Investigators expected to unravel the impact "culture" may have on "nature."

However, in the early 1970s most of the popular feminists, such as Germaine Greer, Elizabeth Janeway, Kate Millet and Pauline Bart, were blaming Freud for most of the abuses of American patriarchy and chauvinism, and sometimes for the absence of a major Marxist tradition. They also were expanding on the influences of, for instance, Masters and Johnson's studies of sexual practices – which by showing that women could have multiple orgasms, and that these did not have to be vaginal to be "mature," opened up new views of female sexuality. Support came as well, but from unexpected quarters: Dolores Klaich soon informed feminists that Freud had been friendlier to lesbianism than run-of-the-mill feminists because he had stated that it "was not necessarily a neurotic illness"; and that Helene Deutsch had reported on the successful analysis of a lesbian patient. But while women psychoanalysts kept pursuing this path, feminists increasingly defined sexual behavior more broadly. They publicly explored the consequences of all sorts of conceptualizations of nature and nurture and soon began to separate psychoanalysis from patriarchy as such and to perceive it as a possible cure for patriarchy. By then the ethos of the liberation movements had been catapulted to the center of the culture by affirmative action laws and outspoken women and had captured the center of the culture. The media increasingly supported the movement, and publishers printed and promoted women's books. But

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because none of the women as yet had explained why women continued to remain in subordinate roles even as more opportunites had opened up, psychoanalysis, however reluctantly, was brought back in.

Now, Nancy Chodorow started to investigate why even the most emancipated women continue to mother their daughters in the way they themselves had been mothered. She rediscovered Horney and Deutsch, Klein and other object relations theorists (they focus on early mother-child relations), and a number of Europeans, such as Juliet Mitchell, Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel, and Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, whose radical premises appeared to match her own. Subsequently, Chodorow criticized some of the Europeans' notions, along with those of (superficial) American feminists, and demonstrated that Freud's judgments about women belonged to his time but that psychoanalysis belongs to ours as well. Jessica Benjamin challenged Chodorow from inside the movement by stressing that the girl's wish for autonomy and agency is not so much a defensive reaction to males as an identification with her mother. And Carol Gilligan (1982) explored women's voices as these develop in infancy in response to mothers who, according to Freud, have been deprived of a clear-cut Oedipal resolution. By the end of the decade, the literary scholar Catharine Stimpson and the psychoanalyst Ethel Person brought out an issue of the feminist publication, *Signs,* on "Women: Sex and Sexuality"(1980), containing the best arguments by the most serious feminists, including psychoanalytic contributions; and Jean Bethke Elshtain (1981) chided feminists for having (falsely) attacked Freud for misogyny. Freudian thought no longer was *non grata* within feminism. But because by then feminists had to catch up with an enormous and internally polemical body of work, they were as likely to start reading a follower of Lacan's as Freud or Horney. This general widening opened the door to feminists in all disciplines. Among them was Marks's and Courtivron's selection of the earlier debates that had been raging among Parisian feminists.

Unfortunately, American feminists were unaware of the fact that by 1980 most of the Parisian activists already had abandoned or lost interest in this enterprise and were becoming therapists. Their typically French rhetorical style, however, was being transplanted to American soil: in its new idiom it promised a deliverance it could not deliver and thereby roughly ended what I define as the First Wave of Feminism, and ushered in the Second Wave. Around the same time postmodernism gained its foothold. Its controversial mode, its refusal to synthesize differences into uniform solutions, and to "privilege" history, was rooted in the same milieu. However, postmodern opinions tended to go against notions of progress (as assumed in modernism and its promises of continuous techni-

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cal advances), while feminism presumes that women will prevail and, ultimately, will reach true equality with men. Evelyn Fox Keller, for instance, maintains that feminist theory "provided us with an instrument of immense subversive power. And along with this provision comes a commitment: nothing less than the reconstruction and deconstruction of knowledge" (1993).

I do not question the commitment to feminism. On the contrary, I share it. But I am arguing that the extent to which recent feminist theory (knowingly or unknowingly) is based on Jacques Lacan's, Michel Foucault's, Louis Althusser's and Jacques Derrida's deconstructions, it is built on the shifting sands their theories rest on. Moreover, their metaphoric rhetoric was embraced piecemeal, and sometimes was translated loosely or even wrongly. Thereby, a succession of disparate psychoanalytic concepts were inserted into our feminist debates. When they furthered women's autonomy they helped further the movement. But at times they fueled a backlash. This happened when literary feminists in universities who were more and more divorced from psychoanalytic practice took the lead. They tended to concentrate on such abstract Lacanian notions as "desire" and to forget that Lacan, even in his seminars, kept referring to what he had learned from interactions with analysands; their own free associations increasingly were extracted from literature alone. Consequently, political outcomes are bound to remain elusive.

As we know, American feminism had proceeded in step with the other liberation movements that began in the late 1960s, particularly with the civil rights movement and with the anti-Vietnam and radical student activities. Although all activists then pursued parallel as well as particular ends, they were predisposed to model themselves more or less on the type of struggle Marx had envisioned for the working classes. But the assumptions of the Second Wave were based on the premises of Lacan's rereading of Freud, which is more attuned to his public seminars on the language of psychoanalysis than to his clinical work. This explains, at least in part, why in America Lacan's thought has come to be at home in universities rather than on couches, and why it so frequently is misread and misunderstood.

Of course, misunderstanding itself is one of Lacan's principles. Since he purports to unravel the unconscious via language, he maintains that once an unconscious thought is made conscious it *ipso facto* must be misunderstood. This is just one of many of Lacan's clever and purposeful obfuscations. These cannot be comprehended without placing them in their intellectual and cultural context. Foucault, Lévi-Strauss, Althusser, and Roland Barthes also championed radical causes, including feminism,

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although Lacan more directly inspired the theories of such French feminists as Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, and Hélène Cixous. The latter have been the primary psychoanalytic mainstay of the Americans' Second Wave.

Lacan's distinction between a phallus (it structures the relation between the sexes) and a penis (it defines the terms) opened the floodgates for various psychological and cultural fantasies. And his alliterations, such as *nom-du père* (name of the father) and *non-du-père* (father's authority), and his humorous asides about *jouissance* (rapturous pleasure) for a while provided food for further inquiries by psychoanalysts, philosophers and general intellectuals in France. But by the time they turned into the talk of American academics, the French had exhausted them: Lacan's heyday was past. (He died in 1981). However, even though most of his French feminist disciples had abandoned his theories, their discussions on perversions, homosexuality, bisexuality, as well as the insertion of Lacanisms into Freudian "mainstream feminism" kept sparking novel theoretical formulations among their American admirers.

In the 1980s, American feminist critics began to import and expand on these French theories. Unlike their colleagues in history, sociology, anthropology and the other social sciences, the professors in departments of literature of the Second Wave eschewed empirical inquiries and, unlike the Freudians (including Lacan), ignored the fact that psychoanalysis had been mandated to keep its links to therapy, and that both Freud's and Lacan's theories always claimed some direct relevance to cases – their own or those of their disciples. Instead, academics now invented uncountable links to unconscious elements in literature; and they constructed imaginative theories of the unconscious that allegedly were attuned to the "postmodern" sensibility. In the process, they presumed to have access to privileged knowledge and, over time, won over many feminists who wanted to keep up with the latest developments, who felt they too could contribute to the pseudo-philosophical twists and turns of Lacanian lore. By then, Foucault's archaeological, historical discourse; Barthes' epigrammatic, literary constructions; and Derrida's philosophical deconstructions and embellishments and exegeses on them took a decidedly American turn. American feminists warmed to their French female counterparts – beginning with Kristeva's *About Chinese Women* (1974), Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974) and Cixous's and Clément's *La Jeune Née* (1975) – around ten years after their original publications. The Americans expanded on the speculations about the relations of women to their bodies and to the unconscious fantasies these trigger in psychoanalytic and other discourse and from them drew rather direct parallels to women's struggles and to the class struggle. Of course,

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these struggles don't directly reflect unconscious fantasies and are largely verbal. It is easy to get carried away and to ignore the fact that Kristeva, for example, has maintained, already for a number of years, that the unconscious cannot be politicized, since this confuses (conscious) political and (unconscious) psychic resistance.

In order to demonstrate by a very specific example that the application of Freudian thought to feminism is culture-bound, I might summarize the state of psychoanalytic feminism in Germany, which ever since the end of World War II has followed an entirely different drummer. Influenced by the Freud-Marx syntheses of the Frankfurt School (including those of emigrés Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, Max Horkheimer, and T. W. Adorno) and by Freudian psychoanalysts, Alexander Mitscherlich convinced his compatriots that psychoanalytic therapy alone might rouse their fellow Germans to liberate their psyches from the Nazi past. Because this assumption cast psychoanalysis as a radical activity, it became the theory *par excellence* for the German left. The psychoanalyst Margarete Mitscherlich (1975), in fact, was the first prominent German feminist. Essentially, psychoanalysts in Germany followed most of the American ego psychologists' therapeutic practices. But they also engaged in joint research with sociologists and psychologists and were especially attuned to their patients' social milieu. The resulting "socioanalysis," in turn, paid more attention to Freud's universalist theses, such as *Totem and Taboo*, than did many American or French Freudians.

Given the individual and social memories that "by necessity" were driven into the unconscious after 1945, and that must be made conscious if, as Alexander Mitscherlich asserted, Germans were ever again to join humanity, socioanalysis makes sense. Margarete Mitscherlich's (1985) thesis that German women too had accepted Nazi doctrines and had been implicated in the Nazi crimes, even as they had been victims of their husbands and of Hitler's male followers, further extends this doctrine. Consequently, German psychoanalytic feminists eagerly continue to mine their own, their patients' and their society's unconscious by more or less classical Freudian methods while adding whatever other social ingredients they deem useful. In the process, they expect to be emancipated as Germans and as women.

Inevitably, German feminists could not support the American feminists' theories of the Second Wave. By 1990, this theorizing appeared to have cut loose from its former moorings in women's social conditions, and in the name of postmodernism gave rise to ever more imaginative and amusing interpretations of literary and social texts that are meant to shock. For instance, they looked at psychoanalytic texts in terms of

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"binding" and "unbinding" them; expanded on Jeffrey Masson's interpretation of Freud's seduction theory; evoked Derridean erasures of difference between modes of thinking as imposing a new idiom on old problems; attacked "old-fashioned" psychoanalytic criticism; advocated existential positions and, generally, were intent on creating a new "feminine imaginary" for postmodern society. Increasingly, they invoked political strategy which, on closer reading, was addressing intra-university politics alone, except for the gradual move from "straight" to "gay" feminism. In the process, literary theory was turned into a special branch of political theory. All in all, most of these theories tend to assume that the unconscious replicates the social world or the feminists' own psyches. However, these are abstractions. When applied as solutions to social problems and inequalities they tend to make lofty assumptions. These assumptions, in turn, to a great extent derive from the deeply implanted postmodernist credo that theory, as much as practice, will solve our insuperable dilemmas. (This may well be an unacknowledged remnant of Althusser's search for "theoretical practice" – itself a very selective reading of Marx's texts.) In any event, the belief that we will be able to create a better society is deeply imbedded in the assumption of feminist theory. In the process, it often has been forgotten that theory ought not to be separated from practice, and that talk about politics does not equal political action – even though it may incite it. Yes, Lacan encouraged his feminist disciples to say what they pleased, to "let their unconscious speak." But the French do not take their talk all that seriously: the love of hyperbole, of equating the sound of words with their meaning was a soon-to-be-forgotten game. Ultimately, in France, most of this verbal gamesmanship did not claim direct political validity, whereas in America it often was taken at face value.

The overall success of feminism itself, I believe, has derived from concomitant changes in laws about divorce, abortion, human rights, affirmative action, etc., from the First Wave of feminism, and which still continues to function in the political realm. Psychoanalysis has figured in this equation inadvertently, insofar as it prepared the emotional ground by assuming that all of us are bisexual, that by altering unconscious response patterns learned in infancy individuals' lives can be improved, and that the proper socialization of little girls will produce liberated women.

In any event, women psychoanalysts have addressed the evolving psychological nature of women in their environment, and have contributed to our understanding of the cultural conditions which are more (or less) hospitable in encouraging sexual and emotional equality. That psychoanalysis as well has evolved and has lost many of its earlier promises complicates the issues exponentially, maybe hopelessly. So, as theories are constructed to explain yet other theories, people often may wonder

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how many more dancers can possibly fit onto the proverbial pinhead – as they multiply, fall off, get on, and jostle each other. This presents problems for the uninitiated, and often for Freudians and feminists as well.

That Freud himself was a product of modernism and that Lacan is said to represent postmodernism makes for many complications. For often both of their ideas of psychoanalysis are incorporated by psychoanalytic feminists without such distinctions. And if, as both Freud and Lacan assume, the unconscious is individual as well as cultural, and therefore timeless, then we cannot regard psychic matters as modern, postmodern or traditional, or as anything else that is temporally bound – whatever label we pin on our era. Both Freud and Lacan placed the individual – men and women – at the center of art and social life. And because Freud analyzed fictional characters and literary figures, Lacan felt justified to do so by focusing on the language of literary texts, and his followers felt free to speculate further. The perceived shift from modern to postmodern conditions – which are said to question everything modern – does create new problems. For the actual fusion in the unconscious of time and space and of fantasy and reality cannot be replicated in applications of psychoanalytic thought to feminist practice.

My own view is an extension of my argument in *The Freudians. A Comparative Perspective* (1989), where I indicate that every culture creates the psychoanalysis it needs. Hence I believe that feminists fashion their means of liberation in response to their local, intellectual surroundings. I support the application of Freudian and Lacanian ideas to the extent that they link up with actual women's needs and desires and thereby help foster women's autonomy. But I am critical of fanciful, abstract constructions that claim political currency but ultimately will be proven invalid and unfeasible: these are built on ideological quicksand and thus may endanger the enormous strides (variously oriented) feminists have made.

To be sure, psychoanalysis is on the decline everywhere: the discovery of the unconscious has proven more elusive than Freud at first assumed; the therapy has become too expensive emotionally and financially. But this does not mean that it will not survive as the clinical forerunner of quicker and simpler therapies, as a means of training the best of clinical practitioners, or as the actual (unconscious) liberating force for women. However, this is yet another cultural phenomenon rooted in the individual and the cultural unconscious – and in political and institutional conditions – that require further inquiry.

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NORMAN MANEA

An Interview

Dialogue Across the Ocean

MP: Norman, you have lived through our common experience of totalitarianism. Have you recovered from it by leaving for the "brave new world" across the ocean?

NM: I left Romania in 1986 at the age of fifty. Right up to the time I left, I tried to protect myself as best I could from the lingering poison which that coarse, hypocritical society injected daily into all its citizens. There were people around me who believed that I had succeeded, that I was a "liberal Englishman," as one friend liked to call me. I was surprised that even a well-known American man of letters, upon reading the manuscript of my recently published volume of essays, *On Clowns,* commented that it showed I was "a free man in an unfree time."

The truth is that the wounds, and the deep, twisted perversion which marked our lives cannot be easily healed. We were lucky enough to survive, however, and as someone recelty said, the survivor takes on an extra risk. The risk of our life "afterwards" contains a continuous process of confrontation, reeducation, and perhaps, we hope, regeneration. As much as is possible, as much as time still allows. . . .

A time of painful remembrances, of often bitter reevaluations, but also of accepting one's life history – which, in the end, did also mean protecting the humanity within and around us. A vague yet persistent belief, containing hope and denial, naivete and isolation and ambiguity and playfulness and denial again – simply to preserve the human being in the progressive dehumanization which threatened us all. The "brave new world," from which we have a lot to learn, has a lot to learn itself, I think, from the fractured and still-active life history of our struggle.

MP: Your experience must have been much more terrible than mine, for

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Editor's Note: *Dialogue Across the Ocean,* an interview with Norman Manea by Romanian poet Marta Petreu, was first published in *Romania Literara,* nr. 31/1992.

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example, because you are a Jew and were obliged to assume this condition as a child. You were deported. You write about it in your prose, although never explicitly. Then you lived among us. I remember you saying once, "I wonder who would hide me?" Tell me about yourself as a Jewish writer in a Communist regime.

NM: The fact that the Holocaust became a taboo subject after the early postwar years of antifascist propaganda is not the reason why I did not speak "explicitly" about my childhood in the concentration camp. Everything was manipulated in the strategy of Communist ideology. It is hard to scrutinize and truly understand yourself in the midst of so many perversions against which you try to pit yourself. I was horrified by the idea that I might involuntarily "serve" the official propaganda. I was also repelled by lamentation – the traditional posture of the victim that the Jew occupies in the philo-Semitic repertoire as well as in the anti-Semitic. I preferred to encode in my fiction what really had happened. Throughout those years of misery and terror, it seemed to me that we were all suffering, that all of us were so "Jewish" that it would have been unseemly to emphasize the extra reserved for the alien. Besides, you cannot really assess your situation if it is impossible to criticize your own ethnic community, if you are forbidden to express your conflicts with it, if you are living in this state of siege, characteristic of totalitarian society.

There are many, far too many things to say about the implications of being Jewish in the multilaterial, bestial masquerade of postwar Romanian socialism – definable not only in social or religious terms but also in strictly individualized accents, definable only through the gradual unraveling of many fluid obscure premises. I refer not only to the many dirty details of anti-Semitic pressure, but also to the much subtler components of daily life including literary life, which was not as totally different from normal social life as many would like to think. Paradoxically, in a period of socialist depersonalization, and later, during the difficult challenges of exile, I gradually became what I had kept putting off understanding that I am. I would like to be able, finally, to write a book about this becoming aware of the inevitable. If I succeed, then my future prose, too, will focus on this grand postponed theme. In this context, *You lived among us* sounds, strangely, like an appropriate motto.

MP: Do you feel at home where you are now? Do you feel safe? Do you consider yourself an American or a Romanian-American writer or a Jewish-American writer? Who is "hiding" you? Or is that no longer necessary?

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NM: I am answering your questions today, August 18th, 1992. It is a rainy day; I am in the house (where Mary McCarthy lived before me) at Bard College, where I've come, although it is still summer recess, for two weeks of quiet, reading, and concentration. It is quiet indeed, in the surrounding woods; it is quiet too in this spacious house, too big for me. . . . Ten months have passed since I received your questions, and I have not had the time to answer until now. This might be indicative of what it is like to be or not to be "between" things, between intense, sometimes excessive demands. This morning I ran into a colleague of mine who had just returned from a year's sabbatical spent in his native country, India. I asked him how he had felt seeing his family, the lay of his native land again. What it was like back home, in other words. That term, he answered, no longer exists for me except in quotation marks. Neither America nor India is home anymore; everywhere and nowhere is a kind of "home."

We live in a centrifugal world, which is scattering faster and faster every day. For me, who postponed leaving Romania until I could postpone it no longer, and who, even after I left, could not until recently accept the violent displacement that is common in today's world, the sense of a visible "banalization" of modern evil gradually eased my resignation; it also eventually helped me to discover the advantages of a sharp break, of a sudden broadening of perspective. We are no longer sheltered anywhere; the risks of daily life in an ultracompetitive and mobile society are at least partially compensated, however, by the variety of the human experience in a rapidly changing, democratic, multinational world.

Do I feel American? Only after some years in America do you come to realize the great gift of this country, namely, that to be American you don't have to feel anything particular. It is this extraordinary diversity of a human community united by the principles of working together that defines the American character.

My relationship with Romania, however, has not yet reached the point of indifference, in spite of the bitterness which has deepened these last few years, sincce we all stopped being "Jewish" and began to redefine ourselves without the heavy lid of terror. It is not easy for me to redefine myself after all that has happened and is happening with me, with the country to which I belonged.

Soon after I had begun to publish, the first translation of my work abroad appeared in 1971 in a literary anthology printed in Hebrew in Israel, *Jewish Writers in Romanian*. I remember that the moment I had the imposing volume in my hands, I was angry. I considered myself a Romanian writer, quite simply, and the question of my ethnicity, which I neither exalted nor denied, was purely personal and of no concern to

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anyone but myself. That is how I thought then and how I would like to think today. Since then, however, I have had all too many sad occasions in Romania and in the Romanian exile community to remember that earlier instance, and to understand that those who think like me are very few, unfortunately, and that probably I was wrong not to take into account those – too many – who think otherwise.

My bitterness deepened in the years after Ceausescu, not only because of the painful deceptions and persistent pathologies in Romanian politics but also as a result of some face-to-face meetings with Romanians from Romania and in exile. And of course in reaction to the way my name was treated recently in the Romanian press. . . . I am not forgetting, though, the wonderful, if very rare, exceptions. I think we can find in Cioran the essential guidelines for understanding this suffering: "You meet your country out of a need for yet another despair, out of the thirst for an abundance of unhappiness."

Would someone here in this "brave new world" shield me from these or even other more perilous risks? In the Jewish tradition, there is a very wise precept: do not put things to the test. It is not good, it is forbidden, to put a man to the test. . . . I would rather not have to ask myself the old questions again. May no one ever have to shield me again.

MP: Are you happy to have your work appear now in some of the best literary publications in the world? Are you gratified with the way your work has been received outside Romania?

NM: It's a joy, of course, to see yourself published in the great literary magazines. Sometimes it has compensated, at least for some moments or some days, for the despair of a writer deprived of his language, plunged into the unknown of a world into which he has come late, weakened, burdened with a too-complicated biography. Recognition of my work outside Romania has given me a certain moments of joy. Such moments sustain our fragile balance, our vulnerable wanderings among chimeras. They renew hopes and their glow persists, but in the long run they resolve nothing. Loneliness soon reclaims its rights; it has us in its grip once more, as we take up the crises, the battle, the struggle, the prayer again.

MP: Would you say that writing makes you happy? Does writing itself justify the "existence from within" which it demands that the writer inhabit? Is writing worth paying any price for?

NM: Writing consists of both happiness and unhappiness, the disease and

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the cure. It is hard to speak of happiness when you refer to literature. But in the stubborn resolve to give meaning to emptiness, to hit upon the essential expression, there is a happy agony, if we can say that, a privileged intensity, a force of the spirit seeking redemption, legitimacy. Writing often helps me to rediscover a means to act, and it makes up for some of the pointlessness that ages daily with us. Exile intensifies frustration to the extreme; writing comes to resemble a prayer, as I think Kafka also said.

I don't think one can answer "in general" a question as serious as whether writing justifies life from within. The answer is strictly personal, after all; it comes from *within*. I struggled with this question when I was in Romania. The moment I thought the price already much too high, I left. In agreeing to pay any price, we open too many doors to hell simultaneously. Vanity wuld demand not only a more acute punishment but a sorry mirror, a ridiculous and pretentious delusion. The very dignity of our vanity demands, paradoxically, that we not pay any price.

An American Postscript, December 1994

PR: You alluded to a campaign against you conducted by the Romanian press in 1992. Would you explain? Is it still going on?

NM: The reaction in the press was related to my essay, "Felix Culpa," on Mircea Eliade's relationship with the Romanian extreme right in the 1930s. The essay was first published in *The New Republic* in 1991, and the next year it was included in my book, *On Clowns: The Dictator and the Artist*. Some American readers considered the essay too gentle, too restrained, and too subtle; they wished that I had gone much further. Yet, with few exceptions, in Romania this essay was considered a blasphemy, and it provoked a huge and lasting scandal; it was a violent, grotesque, and dark "carnivalization of blasphemy" which used such delicate and elegant venerations as "traitor," "the dwarf from Jerusalem," "detractor," "Mr. Garbage," "policeman of the spirit," and so on, to identify me. As one of the leading Romanian literary critics remarked, "Norman Manea's essay provided for the sudden and spontaneous alliance of private citizens, public personalities, publications and institutions promoting otherwise seemingly irreconcilable positions. A thorough call to arms was sounded, and N.M. was almost unanimously identified with the monster that assaults the 'great values of Romanian culture'." The carnivalization has lasted for more than two years. Now

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and then, newly animated fables still spring up in the press.

PR: You spoke of the "brave new world" having still much to learn from the "life story" of the struggle against totalitarianism. Could you elaborate on this?

NM: There are, of course huge differences between a closed society, distorted by terror, fear, and misery, and an open society, distorted by selfish competition and trivial publicity; between a manipulated, hypocritical collectivism and a well-trained individualism. But it is sometimes amazing how resentment and the thirst for power drive people no matter where, in a society obsessed with lies as well as in a society obsessed with money. What we saw as a disastrous replacement of professional criterias with Party criterias is called here "political correctness." Demagogy, cynicism, censorship, bigotism survive, under different labels, even in a free society. After the defeat of fascism and the collapse of Communism, the open society itself is undergoing a very deep crisis, I think, a loss of coherence, of decency, of its generosity and grandeur. The need for an enemy (ethnic enemy, ideological enemy, gender enemy, religious enemy) drives and confuses people also in the brave new world. In trying to understand the dangers facing democracy, it may be useful to look to the "life history" of the fight against totalitarianism, to what it meant to oppose political pressure even when it implied taking risks.

PR: Could you tell us something about what you hope to be working on in "the book about becoming aware of the inevitable"?

NM: It should be about being an inevitable alien, the conclusive outsider. When you discover your "foreignness" at five years of age, in a concentration camp, you are instantly connected to an ancient collective tragedy that annihilates your options. Later, Communist totalitarianism meant not just prohibition and destruction of tradition, but also a complicated education in being marginal and suspect. Finally, exile returned me, at the threshold of the age of white hair, to the condition of alien and nomad, to which I had thought I had found a solution – by immersing myself in the language and culture in which I was born. This encompassing condition is about what I hope to write in my next book.

PR: The theme of being fated to be alien, of the inevitable outsider, as you say, is detectable in *October, Eight O'Clock* and *Compulsory*

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Happiness, your previous collections of fiction published here in English. Is it also present in your new novel, *The Black Envelope*?

NM: Certainly more so, this time, in a more obvious way. In the very last scene of the novel, a character even speaks directly about exile, quoting the foreboding lines in Cavafy's famous poem: "I'll go to another country, go to another shore . . ."

PR: How did *The Black Envelope* come to be written? How, as you intimated, was it "sanitized" before its first publication, and what is it that is "encoded" in it?

NM: In Romania, the book was considered scandalous by the censor and was rejected several times. I told the story of writing the novel, of the struggle with successive censors, and of the mutiliated form in which it finally appeared, in "The Censor's Report," an essay included in my book *On Clowns: The Dictator and the Artist*. A nightmarish story. But to rewrite the novel now, in America, taking into account what had been cut off then and what happened in the meantime there, and thinking about my new American readers here, has been almost as difficult and painful as the craziness of the Romanian adventure of the book.

PR: We have been fortunate enough to receive a manuscript copy of the novel from Farrar, Straus & Giroux, which will publish it this spring. There is a difference in tone between *The Black Envelope* and your earlier stories published in America. How does the novel reflect the life in Romania which you left behind? For many of us who do not know what it is like to live under "the heavy lid of terror," could you explain a little about it, although, as you say, you have "encoded" this experience in your writing?

NM: The sudden collapse of "real socialism" was the result of a long, inner degeneration, of a deep process of decay. The novel is preoccupied with capturing the impulses, the revolts and the apathy of this closed universe of suspicion, lies, masks. It is an ambitious book, because it tries to describe the predominant larval state of confusion and waiting, where large and small events tend to be resorbed into a perpetual pulverization, into a nebulous, leaden and petty atomization, dissipating the epic. It is not easy for a fiction writer to describe this absence of epic and still to animate a strong plot, colorful characters, to interject black humor and poetry, into a self-sufficient textual structure. This fractured world, this pathology of depersonalization demand a "fractured" style, a "shocked

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grammar."

At the center of the novel, you find a clownish character wh tries to scrutinize his own mediocrity and transcend it, to understand his own impasse, in a society which celebrated mediocrity and denied the impasse. Attempting to clear up the mystery of his father's death forty years after the fact, he faces the dying environment of his daily life, with its underground connections to the past. He tries to resist the external, dangerous pressure by "walling in" of the self or by denying of the self, through a confusing show of masks. A description from "within," with its pantomimes, jokes, dreams, and its panting rhythms, where the grotesque, the irony, the sarcasm seem best suited to reveal this fractured and corrupting universe of ambiguity. The society of the deaf-mutes becomes in *The Black Envelope* an emblem of a totalitarian society and therefore, probably, the novel has been alled a "Kafkian allegory" of daily life under the Communist lid of terror. I hope that the American reader discoveres in it a new vision on a not-so-new theme.

PR: Do you recall a recent observation of yours about a writer's estrangement and at the same time his intimacy with his reader? It is from the text of the talk you gave at our 1992 conference, published in the issue of *Partisan Review* on "Intellectuals and Social Change in Eastern and Central Europe." You wrote, "The artist is, no matter how paradoxical it may seem, a secret laborer of love. Is the exile a 'disappointed lover'? Against all odds, love continues to tempt the artist in exile, no matter how sarcastic, codified, or evanescent his work. He daily reinvents the premises of the difficult search; he honors his ideal reader, a stranger both like and unlike himself, with the gift of an exacting love."

NM: The second part of the poem by Cavafy I quoted earlier reads: "You won't find a new country, won't find another shore . . . there is no ship for you, there is no road. As you've wasted your life here, in this small corner, you've destroyed it everywhere else in the world." These lines, as well as my observation, suggest the meaninglessness of the burden of exile. And yet, when the writer in exile reinvents, despite all odds, the premises of his search, he is inventing not only his old love for his art once again, but also inventing a new trust, a new hope, and a new love for his new, strange reader.

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DOROTHEA STRAUS

Little Colette

Large cities are composed of enclaves, as though to mitigate their overwhelming size and the awesome longevity of stone, asphalt, and iron. And just as a celebrity may assume in society a deceptive air of bonhomie, the streets of Paris intersected by boulevards and architectural vistas are made intimate by quarters resembling French salons. Doors, windows, balconies, patios are like period furnishings, witnesses to successions of urban gatherings. They bring the past nearer and endow my transitory visits to Paris with keyhole glimpses into history.

For a time, shortly after World War II, I liked to linger in the courtyard of the Palais Royal. Beneath its arcades, I seemed to recover a faint cacaphony of faraway voices: French Revolutionary orators as well as farmers from outlying districts, shopkeepers, prostitutes, and money lenders hawking their wares. Now the area is deserted and silent except for the occasional shouts of children at play.

The Palace, enclosing three sides of the quadrangle, is as extensive as a Renaissance town. It had been built in the seventeenth century by Louis XIII for Cardinal Richelieu, but it was Anne of Austria who became its first tenant. With the rise of the bourgeoisie, the Royal suites were transformed into a beehive of apartment complexes. I was always drawn to a particular window, no different from its neighbors, but on the wall beneath the regulation balcony where ordinary city sparrows hopped and twittered, a brass plaque was inscribed: Colette lived here.

The sight of ancient places may be markers for the past, but books, also, are beacons along the route of the years. For me, for a long time, the works of Colette shone steadily. Yet, although my husband became her publisher and we promised one another that we would make the pilgrimage to the current reigning literary royalty of the Palais Royal, we never did so. And I saw her only with my mind's eye, at the end of her life, crippled by arthritis, confined, for the most part, to the ship of her famous king-size bed in her apartment in the Palais Royal. From there, she continued to write with gnarled fingers and to receive friends and their offerings of flowers, choice chocolates, or a bag of chestnuts with rough, hairy shells that recaptured her childhood in Provence. To her sensitive nostrils, olfactory antennae, the products of nature were as

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aromatic as any perfume. In her painful immobility she could be consoled, also, by the velvety padded touch of a cat, or the soft, voluptuous folds of an afghan. An aged great lady, a hedonist, she continued to sport a tousled head of curls and a coquettish, frizzy *belle époque* bang, beneath which her feline glance retained all of its cunning acuteness. But she died before I could behold her in actuality.

I had her books. Most of her novels are set in Paris, the scene of her adult life: on the stages of music halls and theaters, in the feminine world of the demimonde. She moved among the famous writers and performers of her day. Lover of her own sex, Colette was able to enjoy men as well; in late middle age, she would claim that the flesh of her young lover was as seductive as the downy skin of a peach.

The work that I chose to read and reread is a memoir of her childhood in the village of Saint Sauver in Provence, light-years removed from the bohemian sophistications of Paris. The central figure is a woman, Colette's mother, an icon garlanded with the produce of the earth and by small country creatures: field mice, rabbits, lizards, birds, and butterflies, the composition painted in vibrant words, bathed in the mellow yellow light of loving recollection.

But deception is buried somewhere. Just like those puzzle picture games from my childhood, in which a face was concealed in the foliage of a tree, these buoyant memories mask a vein of longing and deprivation. The title – *My Mother's House* – is telltale. The home belongs to Her: Sido (Sidonie), and the boisterous children surrounding her resemble the small animals decorating the rustic goddess of the icon. As for the father, with his wooden leg (a trophy from World War I), he is scarcely more interesting to his daughter than an old carriage horse sequestered in his stable library.

"I follow her vaguely disturbed that she [Sido] should be worrying about my father . . . . He scarcely ever goes out, she knows perfectly well where he is. There would have been more sense, for instance, had she said to me 'Minet-Chérie, you're looking pale. Minet-Chérie, what's the matter?'"

Although Sido remained an oddly elusive parent, all things existed to worship her – the mother – the supreme invention of her daughter, the writer Colette. Sido was more attuned to nature than to any person.

" . . . Already out of sight, her voice still reached us, a brisk soprano voice full of inflexions that trembled at the slightest emotion and proclaimed to all and sundry news of delicate plants, of graftings, of rain and blossomings, like the voice of a hidden bird that foretells the weather."

Surely, the child might have wished for something more, and ocasionally, her need broke through the artist's pigment of idolatry, but it

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was quickly covered over by another layer of rich paint. The adolescent Colette watches her mother mend a broken vine, binding it around twenty times with gold string.

" . . . I shivered and thought it was jealousy," she wrote, "but it was merely a poetic echo awakened in me by the magic of that effective aid sealed in gold."

In her memoir, personal longings are transformed into a matriarchal mythology, and I, perhaps foolishly, wanted to meet the founder of this pagan faith. Books, however, should be kept separate from their makers, but just like a lover who courts domesticity, not realizing that familiarity will extinguish the glow of romance, we continue to seek out the flesh and blood human who has already given us the best of himself on the printed page. Eventually, I did penetrate that special apartment above the entrance to the courtyard of the Palais Royal. But it was merely ordinary, dark, and cramped, permeated by the smell of cabbage being cooked next door.

Colette de Jouvenel (known as "little Colette" to distinguish her name from her famous mother's) was our guide, pointing out this, explaining that. Everything had been left reverently in place, exactly as it used to be. For the guardian of this museum – domicile – each homely object represented a relic in a shrine. We followed Little Colette all over the premises, the rooms the ailing, aged writer had called home for her last years. I paused longest near the bed from which the arcades at the Palace could be viewed when the heavy window drapes were parted. But with the disappearance of its occupant, the legendary "barge-couch" was just another shabby piece of furniture, and the "blue lantern" (the title of her last book) was merely a goose-necked lamp. In the kitchen, however, the utensils appeared to have been put aside only yesterday: the knives, forks, and spoons at readiness for use, a pottery bowl, though empty, held the shadow of piled fruits and those rare hairy chestnuts indigenous to the region of Provence. I thought of the Etruscan tombs in which the deceased are buried along with their household artifacts to keep them company in the realm of death. In Colette's apartment, on the contrary, these domestic articles were preserved for the benefit of the living – the fans of the renowned author. But they served only to emphasize her death and the perishability of humans in contrast to the permanence of inanimate objects.

A large photograph of a handsome, fair-haired man caught my eye.

"My father," Colette de Jouvenel explained.

This portrait must have been a posthumous addition to the museum. Surely, Colette had not lived with the likeness of her divorced husband. In her life, as in her books, Henri de Jouvenel had glided almost imperceptibly. His regular, virile countenance was a jarring note in this femi-

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nine cave of remembrance. Furthermore, I could discover no trace of family likeness in his daughter's plain face. As she displayed with pride her mother's abandoned possessions, I examined her carefully. The genes are often capricious – could this middle-aged, weathered woman, dressed in dowdy country tweeds, wearing sensible ground-gripper oxford shoes, be the offspring of the correctly good-looking de Jouvenel and Colette? Had she ever been that child-sprite, "Bel-Gazou" (her mother's pet name for her), known to us from the memoirs? Rather, she resembled a French version of Miss Marple, the mannish British heroine of Agatha Christie's mystery novels.

"This is my mother's shawl," she was saying.

But I shrank from the gossamer wrap, as though it had been a shroud.

A light rain was falling outside in the courtyard where the treble voices of children were proclaiming the scorings of their game of ball. I wished to escape into the semi-open air of the roofless quadrangle.

"Where should we go for lunch?" my husband asked.

"When I am in Paris I always dine in the Palais Royal, at the restaurant Grand VeFour. They reserve my mother's table for me," Colette de Jouvenel answered. And, grabbing her oversized, serviceable, mannish black umbrella, she preceded us down the dark narrow stairs, and accompanied by the persistent smell of cabbage, we left the apartment.

"Wait for me here, I'll be right back. I must fetch my little dog," Colette called, as she trotted out of sight.

Beneath the balcony of the writer's apartment, the words engraved on the brass plaque had lost their import.

The restaurant Grand VeFour nestles within the historic compound of the Palais Royal. Many generations of famous diners have come and gone, as well as the anonymous imprint of a child tourist in Paris (that other self that I used to be) – in the company of my father, an enthusiastic gourmet. As my eyes grew accustomed to the twilight in the temple devoted to culinary art, a host of nymphs in scanty draperies bearing cornucopias overflowering with fruits and flowers emerged painted on the glass panels of the walls. Years later, they are still there, they still offer up their bounty to the senses; just as in a cathedral the saints depicted on stained glass pay homage to the soul.

The maître d' greeted Colette de Jouvenel with ceremony and led us to her mother's special table in a corner of the room. Dressed in swallowtails and pin-striped trousers, he might have been a red-robed cardinal officiating in the false night of a cathedral. As I slid along the banquette, making room for little Colette and Sacha, her miniature brown poodle, I felt like the boy Marcel Proust, had he been privileged to enter the aristocratic, historic pew of the Duchess de Guermantes in

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the church at Combray.

After a deep bow, the waiter, carrying a menu as large as a map of the world, withdrew. Colette had ordered white truffles. "My mother's favorite dish," she told us, adding that Colette used to say that they prepared them, here, just as Sido used to do.

Sacha, seated between his mistress and me, was daintily picking at the smoked salmon on her plate.

"I like it here," Colette de Jouvenel commented, "they truly appreciate dogs."

Yet I sensed that our hostess was eager to return to her home in the country. But the site was not Saint Sauver, with its luxuriant southern fertility. Rather, I pictured her striding over the sandy barren hillocks of Normandy, her tweed cape billowing in a salt, north wind. She is followed by a pack of sporting dogs and the citified dandy, Sacha, her constant companion on her brief stays in Paris. The obscure rural existence must have been a lonely one, lived in the shadow of her mother, and it was she who brought little Colette to the city (an awkward, middle-aged vestal virgin), to tend the altar to literary fame.

I had heard, often, people murmering, "Poor little Colette, she never had a real mother!" It was true that motherhood was not natural to Colette, who entrusted the care of her "Bel Gazou" to a governess, while she led her uninterrupted Parisian life away from the salubrious seaside nursery of her only child. On brief visits, she played the mother role, a classical actress declaiming her love in self-conscious poetic phrases. Now I see Colette de Jovenel walking alone. Overhead, the gulls seem to be calling, "Bel-Gazou, Bel-Gazou," but the name repeated by the birds is cold – distant as the white caps on the horizon of a gray, northern ocean.

We parted from our hostess outside the restaurant Grand VeFour. In my last view of Little Colette, she is standing in a heavy rain with Sacha, her miniature poodle, held closely, like a cherished baby, in her arms, sheltered from the downpour by the oversized, mannish, black, utilitarian umbrella.

Behind her, through the sooty fog, the image of the other Colette loomed. The Parisian author, woman of the world, with her trademark thatch of curly hair, her clever feline glance, beneath the frivolous *belle époque* bang. Mother and daughter are joined in a double exposure of the insufficiently loved child.

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"Rebuilt, modernized, luxurified, yes. But the neighborhood has lost its once-incomparable character."

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ADAM ZAGAJEWSKI

The Chairman's Secret Speech

Flowershops, open even on Sundays, and the sour smell of the earth. From inside the store appears the tall saleswoman. Adjusting the hairpins in her chestnut hair, she asks a timid boy what kind of bouquet he would like. Roses. Asters. Carnations. Baroque peonies. Garrulous chrysanthemums. Poppies. Sunflowers. It is quite late. Please don't take notes. It is night, dark, full of a troublesome rain, and I am old and sick. It may just happen that I will die soon. We have learned a lot since Aleksey Tolstoy said death was a bourgeois superstition, and death has been a patient lecturer.

It isn't easy for me to begin. I have already given hundreds of speeches. I would get a text at the last minute, and I read it trustingly, for I have always had devoted aides. But the aides look at us with curiosity; with fear and hope they await the moment when some great funeral will once again interrupt the usual routine of meetings, greetings, and farewells. The cannon carriage is the last vehicle in a long line of those at the disposition of a great man. Enormous hills of flowers grow, but they have no fragrance. It isn't easy for me to begin.

We have more and more cities and villages, railroad lines, train cars, countries, languages; military parades occur so often that the roads must be changed over and over again, ruined by tank tracks. Victory parades. How many presidents would have liked to have been in my place, even in my ailing body: the body of a leader is more than he alone, it is his endless properties, the featherbeds of his subordinates, the ships of his flotilla submerged in green water, the school textbooks in the countries he has conquered, his young, freckled soldiers and the fiancées of his soldiers and the fiancées' sisters, and the soldiers' brothers and the custom officials, and censors with an alert look, and doltish clerks; and even traitors belong to him, although it seems to them that they don't at all, and emigrants are also his property though they try and deny it. The more they deny it, the more they belong to him. The body of the leader, like every other organism, is made up of an infinite number of

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cells, red and white corpuscles, bacteria and viruses, glands and muscles. I like to think about my great imperial body, rinsed by oceans, veiled in winter by merciful snow, defended by freckled soldiers. I often imagine the small towns being nothing more than magnified villages (train station; long, narrow almost rushing street planted with scrawny linden trees; two bakeries; a hairdresser; and finally a town square with its fork of a monument, sticking up tentatively in the very center of the square); I have never set foot there, yet I am present there and strongly so – in portraits, posters, decrees, even in dreams.

There are good thoughts and bad thoughts. Sometimes unpleasant, malicious things reach my ears. One hears accusations. The universal love which, until not too long ago, bound us warmly and tightly is coming apart at the seams. One hears accusations, usually about two decades late. One hears that we murdered, that we were cruel. And who says this? People who have stopped believing in the immortal soul. They are appalled by killing because they do not believe in the existence of the immortal soul.

Yes, we killed. Please think about the sort of life they oppose to death. What exactly were we depriving our victims, our opponents of, what sort of life? A lazy, sedentary, vegetative one.

Can someone who tears though a cobweb in a forest, only because that someone is running, be accused of a crime? What exactly did we destroy? Life? What is it, if it does not grow into one with us, if it does not join us, if it does not increase its velocity, movement? (We are movement.)

Do you remember Dickens's novels? The small, greedy people in Dickens, monstrous characters, the monsters of suburban households, pitiless shopkeepers, gluttonous old men, cruel, heartless men and women?

Do you remember Dickens's novels? Inscrutable, dark life, fulsome hatreds, suffering, disgrace. The little streets of London, the labyrinth in which innocent children perished every day. Do you remember the illustrations in the Dickens' novels? Hooknoses, dullwitted faces, stupid, ordinary snouts. So much evil, so much baseness, which also carried itself with such dignity, walked in glory, in the bourgeois praise of virtue. Do you recall the helplessness of the small heroes in Dickens, heroes condemned to a hopeless struggle against the tyrants of family, school, parish, shop? Life? That was your life: dirty, slovenly, life deprived of splendor in the alleys of great cities. The gold coin shone more brightly there than the flames of hell and was more desired than salvation.

And perhaps you have read Léon Bloy? Oh no, I will not refer you to our writers, witnesses from the other side will suffice. Do you remember what Léon Bloy wrote about property owners, about the saleslady

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who smiles at you? But just try and tell her that you are fifty centimes short. Ah! Try to tell her that you do not have enough money. That nice person will immediately change into a tigress, will call the police, handcuff you, and send you to the guillotine.

And us? What in the world did we do? We murdered, built concentration camps, that's true, but we were reaching for the characters in the Dickens novels. We wanted a better life, a different humanity – nobler, purer. We wanted every city to be a capital. We wanted broad, well-lit streets.

What exactly did we destroy? An evil world, full of suffering, pain, anger, and boredom. An impenetrable, opaque world. Streets coiled like snail shells. Gardens, jungles of shrubs. Stuffy July evenings, the shouting of drunkards, the unconscious singing of birds, narrow and tangled streams, mountain chains scattered without order on the map, twisted borders stealing like thieves between countries. Sled races, the frosty smell of snow, the rosy cheeks of servants, apples lying still on white paper in basements, locks made of massive metals, expensive restaurants, in which food was piled high in pyramids and waiters walked stiffly like mannequins. Parks and forests full of lovers in June. The mocking, repeated whistle of the thrush, echoed in every vale. Judges – old men in wigs, with eyes red from little sleep – called to pardon or to kill, a task greater than they could handle. Beautiful diplomats, eaten by syphilis. Drivers, sleeping with mouths wide open, waiting for their masters. Children whipped at school. Execution squads composed of helpless soldiers who would have preferred the gardener's job of grafting trees. Whores freezing in alleys. The vibrating shouts of onion venders at the market, where the crowd, it seemed, would immediately explode municipal boundaries and take off across the fields and fencerows for another country.

What exactly did we destroy? A boring history with its small conquests, a history which neighboring world powers drank slowly, gulp by gulp, instead of intoxicating themselves with a real, absolute victory; a history with its low triumphal arches, recalling bourgeois furniture. We destroyed the world damned by prophets, hated by poets, the wormy apple. In the fall, swallows flew south. Smoke traveled to heaven, creeks steamed at daybreak, wagtails ran along the beach swaying like living fans. A train sometimes stopped at night in a field, and the heavy puffing of the steam engine flushed birds hidden in invisible trees. Tall poplars marked the road. A hawk hovered under clouds, a storm approached, hail and plumes of lightning. A fat policeman had difficulty buckling the belt under his stomach. Jewish neighborhoods and synagogues, the harsh God of the Jews, a polyglot who also knew Yiddish. The despair of beggars who had to leave their modest dwellings because they could not

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pay rent and ended up on the streets, in the freezing cold, to die.

Do you regret this? Prelates in heavy cassocks? Do you regret slides and orchestras that played Viennese waltzes in parks? Health resorts in which Goethe bowed to the emperor? Do you regret the thugs who allowed Mozart to die? The unshaven monks who sang Gregorian chants at dawn in a cool chapel? Do you regret the unfathomable multiplicity of races, denominations, and human types, the crowd that walked slowly down the street like an enormous herd of animals crossing the prairie? Do you regret sunrises over battlefields? The slaughter of Austerlitz and Jena? What is it you regret? The distraught weeping of fiancees who have understood that they will remain old maids with dry cheeks? Do you regret the conflagrations of cities, conflagrations that consume a house a second just the way Gargantua devoured a pork roast? Disputes about universals? Abelard's shame? The grotesqueries of parliaments with their vain deputies that can be bought off, trafficking in every imaginable belief and ready to change their political, national and even sexual colors every week if only someone would offer them a little more gold? Do you regret a God no one has seen? Theologians writing long letters that are never answered? What is it exactly that you regret? Small nations, living with their comical hopes and tending their ridiculous, complicated grammars that no one would ever be able to master? Inept uprisings and sentimental campfire songs? Parliamentary sessions disrupted by drunken hecklers? The cruelties of Prussian officers? The last minutes in the life of a suicide, who lost everything in stock-market machinations?

Winter covered the poverty of the cities. Scarlet bullfinches appeared in January. Ferries sunk in the rivers. The Titanic sunk like an iron. Military orchestras practiced for concerts hours at a time. Many unnecessary things. Crusades. Contests. Tons of deception everywhere. To maintain our standing on the appropriate hierarchical level, to mend worn stockings, patch up trousers, polish shoes to a spit shine, so that no one would think we were out of money, in decline. It is better not to eat for a week than to show a hole in the stocking. Forsythias bloomed in the spring. Starlings appeared. Servants stood on the windowsills and washed windows. Soldiers got leaves. Snow melted and rivers swelled dangerously, yellow waves beached trunks of toppled trees, dead gophers, birds' nests. Rains washed sidewalks. In artistic cafés people discussed nihilism.

The boredom of history: always the past tense, the eyelid of perfective verbs, the eyelashes of adverbs. Mercy for those who lived.

Pioneers headed for the West. Always in the past tense. Sunsets, bloody; predicting defeat, the lost battle. Then a light moon floated over the rivers and ponds, reflecting in every puddle. Time passes through

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the sentence like a reaper through a field. Miserable, small plunder. Someone brought a hare, someone else was happy with a full sack of juicy pears. The strange impression one has when leaving the city for a broad space: the horizon grows, there is more air, the enormous lung of flaxen steppe gives momentary joy. Our people were model at the beginning. Model. Humble, noble, cultured, decent. They understood the seriousness of the situation. They came at daybreak. There wasn't a trace of anger in them. They wore leather jackets, and had swarthy, sharp faces, they were gentle as teachers of the people. They were able to avoid exaltation, pathos. They came at daybreak, sometimes without even having the time to eat a decent breakfast. They slept three, four hours a night. No one remembers this. Many of them paid for this later with illnesses and ulcers. They gulped down burning, bitter coffee, ran downstairs to their cars three steps at a time and drove through sleepy, lifeless towns from which rose the singing of blackbirds. Dew fell on park lawns. Marble statues looked at the black cars indifferently. It is held against us that these cars came at dawn. If they hadn't come at dawn, those people would have slept until noon, tossing in their stale bedding; then they would stand in front of a mirror for a long time, looking at themselves, yawning, frosting the surface of the glass with their breath.

It is possible that there were mistakes. One has to allow for the scale of the enterprise. I personally regret Mandelstam, even though I realize that some of the later poems would never have been written if not for the policies we were applying to him. Our people liked cheerful songs, the sound of the accordion, military marches, parades, and the future. They were content with modest nourishment; they never complained that they lacked champagne or truffles. We stood before a white canvas then, as painters; our every stroke changed the face of the world. We liquidated horse races. We never allowed certain kinds of boxing or wrestling. We would not agree to things tolerated by those moral Americans. One had to simplify many complicated processes.

What is it that you regret? Hunting with its unspeakable cruelty? Popes with their cold, lordly lack of interest in suffering? Tables set out under old trees so that certain people could feast four days and four nights? The past tense? The trumpets of the postillion?

Fog in the meadows. In childhood I thought that willows were not trees. They are entirely different, supple, deprived of form. The wind gives them form. I tried then to imagine America, the great cities with their chaos of neighborhoods and races. I imagine modestly dressed immigrants, freezing at dawn, waiting for hot soup, which they would not get until noon, from the hands of an elegant and weary lady. Jews, Armenians, Poles, Irish, Italians, Greeks. What a waste, what an excess of

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races and languages. Dark hair, white teeth, blue or brown eyes. The enormous eyes of children, widening like desire. It's too bad, but we had to punish the children as well. I remember this without pleasure, without particular satisfaction. Great changes cannot satisfy everyone, that is not why they are brought about. One must realize that great transformations never transpire on the lyrical plane, so to speak – that is, on the plane of confession, feeling, longing, lament, which are directly accessible to our experiencing of them. No, the great metamorphoses have an epic character. There are few who understand this; we live in times when that maudlin philosophy existentialism was greeted with a standing ovation.

The wind blows. The wind is whipping up again. Tomorrow the next parade awaits us. We cannot be satisfied with everything. In recent years we have become the object of unjust attacks. Sometimes I think that humanity has not matured enough to appreciate these fundamental transformations, that it wants to stick to its little sins, its indolence. Humanity with sticky fingers is sneaking into the larder and licking the sweets earmarked for later, for other holidays. Fat, self-satisfied humanity sits for hours in front of the television set and purrs with delight. We imagined man somewhat differently, we assigned him other tasks. Even our people have changed. They are no longer as youthful; they have begun to look with interest and envy at that enormous human infantry that has remained behind. I don't know. I don't understand it. If I were younger, I would start all over, just as I did then, with the same enthusiasm, with the same impartiality. I do not understand what happened. Flatness, mediocrity, a lack of imagination, ease, dull-wittedness triumph. Small, limited merchants stand at the head of historic nations. In their electoral programs there is only butter, bread and butter, ham and bread, mustard and ham. Himalayas of butter. The astounding sentimentality of these people: they assess their losses, pretend to be outraged when one of our prisoners dies. But they are not really concerned with that. Thoughts are invisible. What has become of the old Europe, the Europe of combative, tough, brave people for whom death was not a cowardly, desperate finale? What has become of the Europe of knights?

Once again an impenetrable, dark, many-headed humanity, a sensual anthill submitting to no laws or plans, a capricious beast full of urges, restless, somnolent, vegetative, seeking mysteries where there are none – in the stars, in the gizzards of sacrificial birds, in the ravings of fortune tellers, in exclamations of love, in moans of passion. Stupid, dark humanity, a zoo, flurry of idiots seeking to sate themselves, goofballs, finding happiness in driving around a Sicilian town on a scooter or marching along an Atlantic beach with an enormous boombox playing black music. The woolly heads of simpletons. Moronic fish eyes. Others are

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returning to church to once again kiss the soft palms of vicars. Perhaps we shall be defeated, perhaps we will be unable to sustain the outstanding heritage of our legendary predecessors; but one day humankind will understand what it has lost, it will realize the opportunity it has squandered, it will notice it has remained alone, like a child lost in the woods – alone, deprived of guides, greedy, fat, lazy, full of indistinct needs and desires that will never be satisfied, terrified, drowning in tears, helpless. Then we will come again, my friends. We are not allowed to take offense.

What do you regret? Childhood? Clouds which seemed larger than the royal palace? Sparrows dancing on asphalt? Carnivals? Butchers in spattered aprons? Horses losing their footing on the frozen road? Life?

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ELIZABETH DALTON

Mourning and Melancholia in *Persuasion*

It might seem that the lucid world of Jane Austen should be exempt from psychoanalytic interpretation, with its emphasis on sex, dreams, and the irrational. Yet all of her novels deal with the ambivalent feelings of young women for their parents and siblings, and all revolve around the motif of sexual attraction and love. Austen's particular brand of enchantment must owe something to this powerful emotional content, with its suggestions of unconscious conflicts and fantasies, as well as to the pleasures of brilliant social comedy. Her novels can be approached from many different critical perspectives, and have been understood and appreciated without benefit of psychoanalysis. A psychoanalytic reading, however, may be particularly interesting precisely because the elegant, witty surface of Austen's style seems proof against such investigation. Psychoanalytic criticism cannot, of course, discover the single final meaning of any text, but may rather cast light on a part of the whole complex phenomenon of meaning – in this case a rather somber aspect of emotional content that is often neglected in favor of the "light and bright and sparkling" side of Austen.

The deeper themes make themselves most poignantly felt in *Persuasion,* the last novel, written as the author was beginning to suffer the effects of mortal illness. As has often been noted, *Persuasion* is darker and more subjective than the earlier works. Its heroine, Anne Elliot, is not a pretty, high-spirited girl like Elizabeth Bennet or Emma Woodhouse, but a melancholy young woman of twenty-seven "whose bloom had vanished early." The novel is concerned largely with Anne's inner life – her sadness and depression, her memories of the past. Woven into the love story are crucial themes of feminine psychological experience: the ambivalent identification with the mother, the conflicting attachments to mother and lover, and the mingled fear and longing associated with the wish for sex and childbearing. Underlying everything is the theme of death, present on the very first page.

Anne Elliot is the best but least valued of the three daughters of a selfish widower – a pattern based upon myth and fairytale and deeply

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rooted in the unconscious. Like Cinderella, Anne has a benevolent godmother, although in this rather ambiguous version of the relationship, the godmother, far from helping the heroine to marry her prince, has persuaded her to reject him because of his lack of a fortune. Eight years after refusing Frederick Wentworth, a dashing young naval officer, Anne remains immured at Kellynch Hall with her father, the fatuous Sir Walter, and her hateful elder sister, Elizabeth. Paralyzed by her suffocating, narcissistic family, she seems unable to reach out for happiness. Only after several scenes with powerful symbolic overtones, in which sexual fears and conflicts are expressed, does she move toward hope, life, and the rebirth of love.

As the novel opens, Sir Walter finds himself compelled by financial necessity to let Kellynch Hall and disperse his family. Anne goes to the home of her younger sister at nearby Uppercross, where she finds not only the cranky, hypochondriacal Mary, but also the more cheerful society of Mary's husband, children, and in-laws, the hospitable Musgrove family. Moreover, Sir Walter's new tenants turn out to be the sister and brother-in-law of Anne's former suitor, who soon reappears on the scene, now equipped with a suitable fortune.

The most striking feature of Anne's response to this turn of events is her resistance to it. This Sleeping Beauty nearly refuses to wake up; she seems to be a victim not only of bad advice but of her own temperament and history. Instead of trying to recapture Wentworth, she avoids him whenever possible. Kept from going to a party where she would see him again, she is not disappointed but relieved: "She could not hear of her escape with indifference." This "escape" from the man she loves is typical of her behavior throughout, from her original rejection of Wentworth almost until the end. To some degree she appears to choose her melancholy fate, avoiding not only her former suitor but virtually every opportunity for pleasure, at most joining in only to please others. At the Musgroves' parties, Anne refuses to dance, instead playing the piano for the other young people, though with tears in her eyes. She is even gratified by the Musgroves' preference for the mediocre playing of their daughters over her own superior performance; their partiality gives her "more pleasure for their sakes than mortification for her own."

In her self-abasing withdrawal, Anne can be seen as acting out the drama of loss described by Freud in "Mourning and Melancholia" – "pain, loss of interest in the outside world . . . of capacity to adopt any new love object" – a normal enough response to a disappointment in love, except for the fact that it has lasted eight years; mourning has indeed become melancholia. Freud asserts that in melancholia, the lost object is "introjected," taken into the ego, where a sort of phantasmal relationship is maintained through suffering. Indeed Anne has been

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"prudent and self-denying principally for his advantage," sustaining her love for Wentworth not by marrying him, but by suffering for him. Her satisfaction in denying herself, her quiet and unrebellious acceptance of mistreatment, have a masochistic quality; this willingness to suffer may be not only the effect but also the cause of her loss of Wentworth.

Paradoxically, although Anne's melancholy makes her appear drab and subdued, her emotions are more intense than those of any other Austen heroine. The particular emotional quality of *Persuasion* is suggested in the references to nature, so unusual in Jane Austen's work – "the influence so sweet and so sad of the autumnal months" – an atmosphere full of the knowledge of loss and death. This bittersweet mixture also characterizes Anne's feelings, which are often "so compounded of pleasure and pain that she knew not which prevailed."

This painful pleasure, or pleasurable pain, suggests the masochistic depth and intensity of her experience. Julia Kristeva writes in *Soleil Noir,* her study of depression, of the positive aspects of the depressive's inner life – the intensity of emotion, the poignant sense of beauty heightened by the awareness of loss, and the intellectual achievements of sublimation. Anne, with her reading of works of moral instruction, her devotion to music and poetry, exemplifies all of this.

Anne's sadness seems to be the result of the loss of her lover, yet we are told that at the age of fourteen she was already "a girl of strong sensibility and not high spirits." Moreover, the novel is pervaded by a larger sense of pain, loss, and death, even beyond the story of Anne and Wentworth. There are several illnesses and injuries and a strikingly large number of widows and widowers – Sir Walter, Lady Russell, Lady Dalrymple, Mr. Elliot, Mr. Shepherd, Mrs. Clay, Mrs. Smith. Two young persons who have died – Dick Musgrove and Fanny Harville – figure in the plot, and the novel's first page records the death not only of Anne's mother but also of an infant, the Elliots' stillborn son.

It seems that the loss of Wentworth produces so deep a melancholy in Anne, and reverberates so widely throughout the novel, because it recapitulates some earlier and even more profound loss. Anne has been rejected by her father, but she has also suffered a still more significant abandonment, and that is the death of her mother when Anne was fourteen. Such a death, especially during the difficult and rivalrous period of adolescence, may lead to guilt as well as grief, as if somehow the child's feelings had brought about this dreadful result. Perhaps Anne's habitual self-denial, including her original renunciation of Wentworth, is a sort of atonement: with her mother dead, has the daughter any right to freedom or pleasure?

More than any other of Austen's novels, *Persuasion* is concerned with

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the past and its power in the present. Like all melancholy persons, Anne feels strongly the pull of the past, with its unresolved attachments and losses. In being pale, thin, and sad, she seems to be living out that past – not only her loss of Wentworth but her identification with the dead mother, who was "not the very happiest being in the world herself." As Lady Elliot suffered from Sir Walter's selfishness, so does Anne. And as Lady Elliot died, so has Anne, at least in part, becoming a prematurely faded creature doomed to spinsterhood and childlessness. The lost mother, no longer a real person whose imperfections can be recognized, has been idealized and taken into the self. Lady Russell finds that in Anne "she could fancy the mother to revive again."

The first love provides the ground plan for others, and the trajectory of Anne's relationship with Wentworth seems to repeat the pattern of that with the mother: attachment, bereavement, prolonged depression. Freud alludes to the "shadow of the object" that falls on the ego after a loss of love; Anne lives in the deepened shadow of two such losses. After Wentworth leaves, she behaves as if her own worth went with him.

Depression is often understood as anger turned inward against the self – "a disguised expression of an attitude of revolt . . . transformed into melancholic contrition," according to Freud. Indeed Anne, unlike Austen's other heroines, never gets angry at those who have injured her – her dreadful family, her impatient suitor, even the person most immediately responsible for her plight, her godmother. Lady Russell consistently and vigorously misguides Anne with regard to her suitors, persuading her to reject Wentworth, then arguing in favor of the uninteresting Charles Musgrove and later the villainous Mr. Elliot, Sir Walter's heir. Although Anne "did not blame Lady Russell," her attitude toward the older woman is obviously ambivalent: Anne feels that if anyone were to ask her counsel in such a case, "they would never receive any of such certain immediate wretchedness, such uncertain future good."

Lady Russell is clearly a maternal figure – godmother, mother's best friend, "one who had almost a mother's love, and mother's rights." Thus the ambivalence toward her can be understood to represent the mingled love and resentment felt for the dead mother. Like the self-sacrificing Lady Elliot, Lady Russell stands for the renunciation of pleasure; she and her persuasion suggest the repressive superego founded on feelings of guilt toward the dead parent. The theme of persuasion associated with her gives the book its title, and the word itself appears many times in the text. Wentworth attributes Anne's defection to "overpersuasion"; Anne hopes Wentworth will see the virtues of "a persuadable temper." There is a search for the right balance between the persuadable and the resolute, repression and impulse, society and the individual.

In terms of this conflict, Wentworth is squarely on the side of im-

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pulse and the individual. As a man, he is impatient and energetic; as a naval officer, he confronts the unmediated violence of nature and of battle. The excitement surrounding Wentworth suggests something of Anne's motive in rejecting him. Every thought of him evokes ideas of danger, safety, and escape. When he leaves Kellynch, "So ended all danger . . . Everything was safe . . . she smiled over the many anxious feelings she had wasted." The symptoms of those anxious feelings – the flushed cheeks, agitation, confusion, quick breathing, pounding heart – are also signs of erotic excitement, which for Anne is inextricably mingled with anxiety.

The language describing Wentworth implies sexual potency: he is "lucky in his profession . . . spending freely what had come freely"; he is "full of life and ardour." His swashbuckling way of speaking of his ship also suggests masculine power:

> "Ah! she was a dear old *Asp* to me. She did all that I wanted. I knew she would – I knew that we should either go to the bottom together, or that she would be the making of me."

The ship seems to have replaced Anne, who did *not* do what Wentworth wanted – perhaps out of fear of the very ardor and energy that have made him successful. Wentworth's "sanguine temper" certainly frightens Lady Russell: "She saw in it but an aggravation of the evil. It only added a dangerous character to himself." Like Anne, she fears this bold masculinity.

Anne's sad and reserved demeanor sets her apart from the other young people; in their company she observes, she overhears, she plays the piano while they dance. They treat her as if she were either too old or too young for their lively sexual maneuvering, like an elderly chaperone or a child tagging along with grown-ups. In the most striking example of this pattern, Anne accompanies the others on a walking party at Uppercross. While the Musgrove girls take advantage of the chance to flirt with Wentworth, Anne mopes along trying to recall sad poems about autumn. She overhears Wentworth say jokingly to Louisa that he wonders where his sister and his brother-in-law, a notoriously bad driver, will upset their carriage this time. " 'If I loved a man as she loves the Admiral,'" declares Louisa, 'I would rather be overturned by him than driven safely by anyone else.' " Louisa, with her usual sexual enthusiasm, is plainly volunteering to be "overturned" by Wentworth.

As if to fulfill that wish, she disappears with him into a hedgerow, where Anne hears them "making their way back along the rough, wild sort of channel, down the centre." The unseen listener and the couple

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seeking privacy evoke the child's fantasy of the primal scene; the couple's passage through the wild, hidden channel inside the hedgerow is also suggestive of the hidden parts of the body and the physical facts of sex. As usual, Anne is on the outside looking in, almost like a child trying anxiously to decipher the mysterious sexual goings-on of the grown-ups. This part of the overheard flirtation, during which Louisa expatiates on the firmness of her own character and her immunity to persuasion, ends appropriately enough with Wentworth giving Louisa a nut, as if to consummate the episode with a sexual pledge.

This scene, based on nineteenth-century literary convention and rich in emotion and imagery, can of course be read in many ways. The psychoanalytic reading focuses on what is odd and off-center about it: the heroine is not in her usual place within the courting pair, but is off to the side listening in. This odd displacement of emphasis adds another, unconscious, strand to the complex of possible meanings.

Louisa's increasingly audacious flirting, her interest in being "overturned," reaches its climax in the famous scene of her fall from the Cobb at Lyme Regis. There is so little violent physical action in Austen's work that this scene creates an effect of almost dreamlike strangeness. On all their walks, Louisa has made Wentworth jump her from the stiles: "the sensation was delightful to her." Her final daring leap from the high sea wall at Lyme suggests a sort of sexual consummation, thrilling and orgasmic, yet by the same token dangerous. In a revealing parapraxis that shows his lack of serious interest, Wentworth lets her fall; she strikes her head on the pavement and is "taken up lifeless!" Language itself, with its preexisting idioms and clichéd metaphors, provides the script for these images. Louisa has acted out literally the metaphor of "throwing herself" at a man, becoming a "fallen woman."

The accident has an aspect of wish-fulfillment for Anne, who sees her more aggressive rival apparently fall dead on the spot. But Louisa may also represent one side of Anne's own dilemma: her fall is a fantasy of what might happen to an Anne who did not repress her feelings. Louisa's "lifeless"-ness is, of course, only a concussion – "there was no injury but to the head" – suggesting that the significance of the episode is mainly psychological: everything has taken place in the head. Having learned her lesson, Louisa will become a rather sober young lady, somewhat like Anne, and will even develop a taste for poetry and for the melancholy Captain Benwick.

However, the physical aspect of Louisa's injury also links her with other female characters, many of whom are stricken in some way. Louisa only appears to be dead, but Fanny Harville really is dead, and so, of course, is Anne's mother. Anne's friend Mrs. Smith is an invalid. As for Anne's sister Mary, "her being unwell and out of spirits was almost a

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matter of course." After Louisa falls, her sister Henrietta contributes to the general female debility by fainting, and the townspeople gather round "to enjoy the sight of a dead young lady, nay, two dead young ladies, for it proved twice as fine as the first report."

Anne's sister Mary is the most interesting of these damaged women because of the ambiguous nature of her condition. Lying on the drawing-room sofa proclaiming volubly, "I am so ill I can hardly speak," Mary is a malingerer who leaps off her couch at the first hint of a good time. But she also evokes some serious issues. With her imaginary complaints, Mary might be seen as part and parody of the nineteenth-century epidemic of hysteria whose victims were treated some years later by Breuer and Freud.

Moreover, although Mary is a comic figure, the image of the woman on the sofa is a highly charged one in nineteenth-century fiction, suggesting actual physical illness and the disturbing mysteries of the female body. There really is something physically wrong with many of the recumbent women in the novels of Dickens, Trollope, and Emily Brontë, as well as with several of the female characters in *Persuasion* and indeed with many real-life women of the period. In addition to the diseases common to both sexes and the usual discomforts of menstruation and pregnancy, women went through repeated risky childbirths without antisepsis or anesthesia. The survivors often lived on with horrible disorders, the aftereffects of contemporary gynecological incompetence, that did in fact make them invalids. (It is worth noting that Jane Austen's sister-in-law Elizabeth died seven years before the writing of *Persuasion*, after the birth of an eleventh child.) Added to this was the appalling rate of infant mortality. This tragic aspect of female experience is alluded to in the story of the Elliot family, which has lost both a mother (although the cause of Lady Elliot's death is never specified) and a child – the stillborn son.

Mary may be seen as an allusion in the comic mode to these problems of sex, marriage, and childbearing and the damage they do to women. Taken seriously, her condition as an unhappy, neurotic wife and mother would not be so amusing. Even less comical is the situation of Mrs. Smith, left paralyzed and penniless at the death of her spendthrift husband. And the conniving Mrs. Clay is also the survivor of an "unprosperous marriage."

Louisa's accident and the image of the "dead young ladies" dramatize vividly this theme of the dangerous fall into female sexuality. Sex is linked not only with loss of honor but also with pain, physical injury, even death, evoking a specifically female fear: that of the tearing of the body in intercourse and childbirth. Admiral Croft seems to allude un-

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knowingly to this connection in joking about Wentworth's involvement in Louisa's accident: "A new sort of way this, for a young fellow to be making love, by breaking his mistress's head!"

The pattern in the novel connecting sex and childbirth with injury is not perfect. But the counter-example, the fat and fertile Mrs. Musgrove, is not exactly positive. There is something disturbingly animal-like in such fecundity, suggested by the ease with which she loses, forgets, then belatedly mourns her son Dick. The ambivalent treatment of motherhood throughout recalls a number of allusions in Austen's letters, such as this mention of her niece's second childbed: "Poor Animal, she will be worn out before she is thirty – I am very sorry for her."

The two most intelligent and independent women among Anne's acquaintance, Mrs. Croft and Lady Russell, are both childless, and Lady Russell dislikes the Musgrove "domestic hurricane." So does Anne, yet she takes pleasure in caring for her sister's children, especially in making them behave better with her than with their mother. "'I cannot help wishing Mrs. Charles had a little of your method with those children,'" says Mrs. Musgrove; Anne has apparently been playing out her maternal feelings in the safety of her role as aunt.

It is in this context that another of the novel's strangest and most significant scenes occurs. Like the later episode on the Cobb, this one involves a fall. Young Charles Musgrove has fallen and injured himself; Anne is kneeling beside the couch tending to him in Wentworth's presence when Charles's little brother, two-year-old Walter, begins tormenting her by climbing on her back. Then suddenly she is "released from him":

> someone was taking him from her, though he had bent down her head so much that his little sturdy hands were unfastened from around her neck, and he was resolutely borne away before she knew that Captain Wentworth had done it.
>
> Her sensations on the discovery made her perfectly speechless . . . . His kindness in stepping forward to her relief – the manner – the silence in which it had passed . . . produced such a confusion of varying, but very painful agitation, as she could not recover from.

Like Louisa's fall, this is a moment of action when wordless gestures resemble the silent language of dreams. The situation itself is evocative: a young woman is caring for a child when a man intervenes as though to take up the role of husband and father. But there is something peculiar about the action. Walter has climbed on Anne's back and has "bent down her head so much that his little sturdy hands were unfastened from

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around her neck." If Anne can't get free, surely Walter's hands are *fastened* around her neck, not "unfastened." And if the child pulls her head down, he must be in front of her rather than on her back. Moreover, cause and effect are reversed: here the bending of the head seems to cause the hands to be fastened rather than vice versa. It is difficult to visualize this scene if the language is taken literally. The confusion, so unusual in Jane Austen's work, may be simply an error that would have been corrected had the author lived long enough to do her usual revision; but from the psychoanalytic point of view, such errors are not without significance.

This is the most powerful physical experience Anne has in the novel, involving distress, loss of control, even violence, and it is caused by having a child attached to her body – until he is "borne away." The language and imagery, the confusion and intense emotion, suggest that the scene may be a disguised representation of a child being born as well as "borne away." Moreover, as dream language often reverses cause and effect and conflates opposites, perhaps Wentworth's unfastening of the little boy from Anne's back represents also the act by which the child is first fastened to the woman's body. Thus this scene may contain in condensed and symbolic form the whole sequence – intercourse, pregnancy, parturition – whose dangers, both real and fantasied, are hinted at in the condition of many of the female characters, including the dead mother of whom Anne is almost the double.

This episode, like the scene in the hedgerow and that on the Cobb at Lyme, is a turning point for Anne and for her relationship with Wentworth. In these scenes, a sexual fear seems to be expressed and to some degree worked through. Here a child has fallen (perhaps the dangerous drop of birth), and the woman caring for him is encumbered by still another, younger child. As in Louisa's fall, unruly instincts are expressed; both scenes suggest a fear of the perils and responsibilities of sex and childbearing, and yet both end on a rather hopeful note, with Wentworth carrying someone off in his arms. Freud asserts that the fantasy of rescue has the unconscious meaning of giving someone or being given a child.

Both of these scenes turn towards Eros, hope, and life and away from grief, depression, and death. Throughout the text, the threads of life and death are interwoven, and death may provide the context for the discovery of a new love or the revival of an old one. Wentworth is invited to the Musgroves' home, where he sees Anne again, because he was captain of the vessel on which the deceased Dick Musgrove once served. Captain Benwick's grief over his dead fiancée leads to his brief infatuation with Anne. And the death of Mr. Elliot's wife has left him

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free to court Anne, a move that arouses the jealousy and interest of Wentworth.

Austen's rather heartless observations about the death of Dick Musgrove and his mother's grief are relevant here. Wentworth sits down one evening between Anne and Mrs. Musgrove to discuss the unlamented Dick and hears the bereaved mother's "large fat sighings over the destiny of a son, whom alive nobody had cared for." Flanking Wentworth like opposed humours are the two grieving women: on one side slender, pensive Anne, who has spent half her life in mourning, for her mother and then for Wentworth; on the other fat, jolly Mrs. Musgrove, whose superficial grief for her son does not interfere at all with her enjoyment of life. The juxtaposition raises the question of how loss should be mourned, and how heavy a tribute the living should pay to the dead.

Although the Musgroves are hardly distinguished people, the two Musgrove households are open and lively. At Uppercross, Anne begins to revive. The change in her becomes visible at Lyme Regis, where the sea wind restores "the bloom and freshness of youth." Captain Benwick, Mr. Elliot, and finally Wentworth himself all notice her attractiveness, and Anne begins to hope for "a second spring of youth and beauty." The final stage of her rejuvenation, like Louisa's leap from the Cobb, occurs at the edge of the sea, the great source and symbol of life, where the artifices and repressions of society are swept away by the power of nature and impulse.

At Lyme Anne meets a new set of people, navy friends of Wentworth, who have some of the life and energy of the sea. Unlike most of the land people, the navy couples all have happy marriages, with the wives sharing their husbands' adventurous lives at sea. In the navy folk, Anne sees and regrets what she might have had with Wentworth; she has to struggle, as so often, against "a great tendency to lowness." But by now the tide has turned irresistibly in the direction of hope and renewal; having glimpsed the possibility of happiness, Anne will not let it escape her a second time.

In the last section of the novel, when Anne joins her family at Bath, she is offered a final temptation to return to their sterile way of life by the proposal of Mr. Elliot, Sir Walter's cousin and the heir to Kellynch. Lady Russell, predictably arguing in favor of this rather incestuous match, urges Anne to take her mother's place as mistress of Kellynch: "You are your mother's self in countenance and disposition. . . ." For a moment, Anne herself is "bewitched" by "the idea of becoming what her mother had been; of having the precious name 'Lady Elliot' first revived in herself." But finally she rejects the destructive course of continuing to re-enact the dead mother's life.

Mr. Elliot's proposal does give Anne something of great psychologi-

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cal significance in this novel, which deals even more openly than Austen's other works with the ambivalent feelings among sisters. Mary's husband Charles would have preferred to marry Anne, and now Mr. Elliot, the only man the haughty Elizabeth considers worthy of herself, chooses Anne instead. Anne even overhears a lady at Bath comparing her to the famously beautiful Elizabeth: "'She is pretty, I think, Anne Elliot; very pretty, when one comes to look at her. . . . I confess I admire her more than her sister.'" As in the fairytale, Anne's earlier humiliation by her sisters is reversed; her triumph is complete.

At Bath, Anne at last has the courage to move toward Wentworth; when he proposes again, she accepts without consulting anyone. She has finally freed herself from the persuasion of Lady Russell, and more important, from that of the dead Lady Elliot. But although she moves away from death and the past, her character does not change completely; for her, pleasure and pain remain linked. Struggling to maintain her composure in Wentworth's presence, she feels "deep in the happiness of such misery, or the misery of such happiness." When all is settled between them, she is "so happy as to be obliged to find an alloy in some momentary apprehensions of its being impossible to last"; for her, there is something "dangerous in such high-wrought felicity." It seems that for Anne, excitement is tolerable only when mingled with the other emotions she knows so well.

As Anne begins her life with Wentworth, there is a general renewal. The Musgrove sisters are happily married; Mrs. Smith recovers her fortune; even Mary is in reasonably good spirits. Most of the dead young ladies, above all Anne herself, have revived.

They leave behind them, however, one who did not recover. Soon after completing the novel, before the final revision, the author herself died, at the age of forty-one. To the neighbors who saw her on her increasingly slow and curtailed walks in the garden at Chawton, she had become "the poor young lady." She died unmarried and childless, the beloved aunt of many nieces and nephews, having lived always with her mother and her sister Cassandra. The only "second spring" permitted her was that of the novel itself, with its acknowledgment of the powers of death and the past, and its celebration of the possibility of hope, love, and rebirth.

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"You're looking at the last link in a triptych that begins with Rembrandt's mother, runs through Whistler's, and ends here!"

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ALMANTAS SAMALAVICIUS

Letter from Lithuania

As the eminent Czeslaw Milosz recently noted, the tradition of singing is of special importance to the Baltic people, going way back in history. Even the Soviet power, crushing all possible forms of national awareness, never managed to conquer this "sacred domain," evocative of those pagan rites of the Baltic tribes that have survived long after the adoption of Christianity. The Balts have managed to sustain a peculiar phenomenon of self-expression, one which has captivated many Romanticists as the living soul of the Old World. Reconciling themselves with this strong and durable passion, Soviet authorities tried to tame tradition by allowing the Balts to express their excess emotion in forms suitable for the glorification of the "people's power," designing and supporting huge dance and song festivals that were regularly held in each country. Despite the fact that these festivals often turned into silent manifestations against the ruling power itself, heightening the national spirit of these suppressed states, they were nevertheless tolerated under the authorities' supervision. It was these "legalized" forms of common existence that allowed the Balts to share expectations of restored independence, though the prospect during those gloomy years was lost somewhere on the horizon. Denied any form of national existence, as well as deprived of their statehood, Lithuanians and the other two Baltic peoples sang out their history and turned it into a glorified myth of the past. Looking back at those discouraging years, it is surprising to what extent the oppressed nation was able to stimulate the consciousness of self-identification and strengthen the general national spirit.

Following this ongoing tradition, an ambitious festival was planned to be held in 1994. It was to have been a gathering of Lithuanian communities scattered all around the world, the first festival to take place after the restoration of independence. However, as the arrangements for the event were getting into full swing, a shadow fell. It was rumored that the festival plans might collapse since the state had announced an inability to provide funds. Such responses from the state authorities are no longer a rarity, though after the overthrow of the Soviet power many international celebrations were held on Lithuanian land.

The 1994 festival did take place after all, but the singing in Lithuania

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is over. Reality is much more complicated, turbulent, and dull, promising little for the future. None of this was anticipated during those glorious days when the empire was dissolving and Lithuania became the first state on its march towards Europe. The present confusion and the spreading chaos contrast sharply with the completely different visions evoked on the road to freedom and independence. Lithuania was seen as a prosperous country that would equal its Western counterparts as soon as the Soviets retreated. When they did, expectations were high, sustained by charismatic political visions and encouraged by much-loved politicians who promised everything Lithuanian society lacked during the years of oppression. The dream endured for some time, before it gave way to witness a complete disaster in policy-making, agriculture, industry, and social welfare. The voices of the political leaders were soothing: it's the past we have to fight now to see our dreams materialized. The "hand of Moscow" was seen around every corner. Critical remarks were openly discouraged. Even the media was cursed and detested by the highest "national" authorities. Something indeed was rotten in the "Danish kingdom."

Many of these problems were fundamentally programmed by earlier political developments. When the national resurgence movement *Sajudis* was established to back up the Soviet reforms, it transformed itself into a power that fought for independence but did not look beyond the goal of independence. Initially, the movement was opposed to the formation of independent political parties. Thus, fledgling political parties appeared on the stage quite late, like infants lacking a good babysitter. Meanwhile, Lithuania's Communist party, with a membership of two hundred thousand during the last years of Soviet power declared itself in support of the "fight for independence" in a peaceful way. Even with a decrease in membership, it remained a strong, influential and well-structured political force, promoting its own imposing leader. The main shortcoming of the newly emerging political parties was that they were created in the images of already existing and visible political leaders, modeled on prewar parties. The classical definitions of left and right were therefore constantly mixed. The inability of right-wing nationals to effect the promised reforms (reconstruction of agriculture and privatization of industry failed immediately, followed by complete chaos in legislation), together with a deteriorating state bureaucracy, resulted in a situation common to a number of other Eastern and Central European states. The comeback of old political forces was rapid and met with little resistance. A shift to the left with a change of political power promised no greater stability. The crime rate increased; social security continued to collapse; and inflation decreased only in the data provided by the

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authorities themselves. State officials and civil servants seem to have inherited nearly all the ill-habits of the much-despised Soviet bureaucracy. Repetitive political scandals, cases of bribery and corruption are a constant reality. However, although the media has reported accurately on the state of affairs, its influence is negligible. Constantly accused by the establishment of creating a "wrong image" for this society, the media alone is not capable of destroying corrupt politicians. What is even more striking is that people are more apathetic and distrustful about everything. It is a dangerous situation.

These developments inevitably suggest questions that are hardly encouraging. What has happened to this society which just a few years ago said a firm farewell to the totalitarian system? Why did it step back? And how long will the past endure? Attempts at replying might be an intellectual puzzle for an outsider, merely an exercise of the mind, but the insider's position is much more dramatic. To some Lithuanians, these problems become existential.

We seem to have made our way into another question – that of the intellectual's role in society. This is rather a precarious question, since we have to define the operability of the term itself. Do we have intellectuals – in the Western sense of the word – in those states making their transit from closed to market societies? Provided with the examples of Havel and the like, we could, perhaps, give a positive answer. But does the rule apply to all of the East European domain? I would be tempted to doubt it. Many Lithuanian academics and intellectuals, writers and cultural figures who contributed to the spiritual resistance of the nation during earlier periods, are completely at a loss, encountering the current situation. Many of them have fallen prey to ruling opinion, prejudices, and beliefs, indicating more a confusion of the mind than an ability to analyze social and political realities. Worshipping myths created in the past, once so important in sustaining national feelings, these intellectuals have thrown themselves into a delirium of visions, retreating from realities. Attempts have been made to restore the pre-Soviet past. It is no coincidence that as soon as the popular national movement won the first free elections, a ritual act restituting the Constitution of 1938 was passed. Many subsequent political actions were based on such rituals, for some time hypnotizing the masses. Writers and many of the leading cultural figures welcomed the semi-heathen glorifications of new political leaders and contributed to the image-making themselves. In the general upheaval of national emotion and euphoria, critical voices were discouraged and often suspected of "serving" the enemy.

Discussing the intellectual climate of Lithuania over the past few years, one should bear in mind that during the Soviet era the tradition of dissident writing was not strong. There were few underground publi-

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cations, mostly directed at informing the world about the state of the largely persecuted Catholic Church. Lithuania had no influential intellectual loners conveying the truth to their compatriots. There were a few courageous fighters who were more appealing as personalities than as critics or thinkers. The Polish or Czech or even Russian situations, with their long *samizdat* traditions, were totally different. Free information circulated mostly through Lithuanian émigré circles in the West, and its way into the country was slow, second-hand, limited to a small circle of intelligentsia. On the whole, educated Lithuanians favored the so-called "legal" forms of resistance, based on the widespread notion that in contributing to Lithuanian culture and language, they might have a lasting impact on the national consciousness. It is not at all surprising that poets, once regarded as the "consciousness" of society and praised for their works with historical dimensions, were themselves Party members much honored by the official establishment. Belief in "legal" forms of resistance may well account for the fact that during the resurgence movement the leadership was taken up primarily by well-known cultural activists rather than former dissidents. Few of the "dissidents" of 1989-91 ever engaged in "free-speaking" activities before the transformations in Eastern Europe.

In the early 1990s, censorship gradually loosened its grip, and the more radical layers of the cultural establishment, notably writers, raised voices against the ruling regime and fueled future public debate. The retreat of the Soviet power granted them full right to speak their minds. The time came to pay back the former establishment for the long years of humiliation and suppression. And yet how many of them were themselves free of common prejudices, able to break with the myths of the past? Regretfully, just a few.

Still, it would be just to say they appeared on the scene at the right moment. People were casting about for open words and emotions. Writers provided them. In a miraculously short time the circulation of literary publications went up. The leading literary weekly circulated seventy thousand copies. Intellectuals spoke at mass rallies and appeared on television. Some were eventually elected to parliament. Foreign visitors were shocked at the number of literati holding key posts in the political establishment. Later, there was a rapid decline. "Prometheus unbound" fell into repetitiveness and self-glorification. Yesterday's men, elevated to the status of national heroes, seemed to enjoy their role without a bit of self-irony. The space open for self-reflection shrank to nothing.

During the years of transition, nationalism was undoubtedly a driving force, bringing Lithuania back to a place on the European map from which it was wiped away by the Soviets in 1940. Throughout all these years, nationalist feelings survived, echoing the period during the end of

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the nineteenth century, when a small group of educated enlighteners began an astonishing process of revitalizing the Lithuanian language and strengthening the sense of national identity. Rural areas became widely infected by these ideas, while the urban centers for some time resisted these influences, since they were under stronger sway of the earlier influences of Polonisation and Russification. The Lithuanian language, the oldest Indo-European tongue, united the reemerging nation. Yet the brief period of Lithuanian independence between the world wars (1918-1940) brought conflict between those feelings of nationalism and the attempts at modernization.

In order to have a better understanding of the recent transformations in Lithuanian society, we must look to its history. Its discontinuity of statehood, interrupted by foreign invasions since 1793, under the first partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the long years of isolation under Soviet rule, have left a lasting influence on Lithuanian minds. What Lithuania needs urgently is for its traditional intelligentsia to transform itself into individually thinking intellectuals. Only independent, unprejudiced voices can influence a maturing society. Detachment from any existing political establishment is essential, in order to alert the consciousness of a society more and more haunted by chaos. Otherwise, Lithuanians will sing their way back to dependence.

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"We're still pre-perestroika here, thank God! – they pretend to teach, and we pretend to learn."

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LEONARD KRIEGEL

North on 99

They are not so much states as states of mind – and in their current decline, they loom against the demands of the imagination like that giant white apparition at the end of Poe's *Narrative of A. Gordon Pym*. Yet the weight of their collective presence still urges the nation toward getting and spending. California and New York remain the raw alternatives for our American future. They may struggle with that future and with each other, but the ambitions of our coastal empires still anchor this nation.

A continent stands between New York and California, yet they take their cues from each other. Like opposing trial lawyers delivering their jury summations, our coastal rivals invent the future and define the past with threnodies of irritation and envy intended to win plaudits from Ohio and Maine, Utah and Georgia. Going under hasn't stopped either of our coastal claimants from wanting to define this nation.

Texas and Florida may arm themselves with statistics on future growth, but the dreams and nightmares littering the national psyche like empty beer cans necklacing mountain roads belong to California and New York. Even the decline in their fortunes reminds us that prosperity in America is quixotic. Millenarian expectation walks hand-in-hand with the prospect of imminent catastrophe, in a land where horror movies existed long before Hollywood discovered the nation's greatest passion was the empty landscape.

California under siege offers the same possibilities it possessed when word of the Gold Rush of 1849 first spread east. From that moment, California romanced the rest of America. Today, as New York in decline turns into itself, California continues to insist on licking its wounds in public. An arresting contrast in facing adversity shows us one state burrowing into its vanishing luster, unable to accept the loss of the transforming power of wealth, its confidence evaporating so that its proudest boast is that it isn't California. Meanwhile, the other feeds its problems to the public the way the Santa Anna winds feed its brush fires each autumn.

I stand on a concrete walk fronting a narrow beach at Santa

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Barbara, oil-wealthy air kissing a changing seascape. Economy battered, landscape ravaged by earthquake and fire, California is yet consecrated by our America. What exists beyond it lies outside its boundaries but not outside its influence. California has rooted itself to the nation's spiritual core. And like it or not, it stands there alone.

Its problems today may be the final nail in the coffin of America's five-hundred-year-old romance with the West. So far west of the West that it defines itself as end point to America (forget Hawaii, a weigh station for Japanese tourists on a shopping spree), west of California is not a question of geography but an image of what we were supposed to evolve into as a nation. California never had much to do with what Americans wanted, but the "California dream" did. As it sheds its role as western endpoint, California may yet emerge as starting-out point for the West's East.

No other state inflicts its presence on America the way California does. Lifelong New Yorkers like me are ashamed to feel so passionately about a state able to make claims on us even as we frame the future without it. Staring across this narrow beach at an ocean dotted with oil rigs and boats that look like models floating in the Central Park sailing pond, I bend into a landscape that itself seems endowed with the power of prophecy.

It is easy to be caught up by the state's singularity. The very air hints at cataclysm. Why does this calm ocean fill me with visions of world's end? Neither bang nor whimper – but with a slide into the spuming depths, Triton rising from the ocean to create California empty, the way it was meant to be. Space dictates one's sense of doom here. As the tide covers the sand in scrimshaws of water and foam, I think of the rhythmic drift of our potential end. Like Matthew Arnold's Darwinian sorrow, a vision of obliteration transforms this superb sunset into a prelude to disaster. Fire, earthquake, flood. On the thin shore I stand, in awe of California on its way down.

Fantasizing its death throes makes me want to chart California's decline. I want things clearly labeled, like the plastic skeleton in my chiropractor's office. Santa Barbara waiting for the Big One demands order, propriety. Like two opposing linemen in the NFL grunting at each other, the New York-California symbiosis of bruised bodies and tired egos seeks new definitions. Unable to break free of the ties that bind us to that other coast, we New Yorkers talk of California with fear: Stay on your guard, be suspicious of sun and fog, trust no one.

Contra California – an intimate bile accompanying a monotonous

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litany. The indictments have been heard before: No streets to walk, no Jewish delis or Greek luncheonettes to hang out in, no beer-stained Irish bars to drink in. Shopping malls, sun, space piled against the long, tedious sky – accusations too petty to be serious and too repetitive to be believed. Facing west makes most New Yorkers nervous. Like sumo wrestlers, the states butt bellies, struggling for America's soul. Hegelian synthesis was never meant to be pulled from our coastal wars.

Even if its streets were hooked into avenues with the grid-like regularity of Manhattan, Californians would seek the promise of space. For space is focus here. Walking on Fifth Avenue is no different from walking on Stinson Beach. One discovers California in patterns of memory. Tea at the Plaza or a stroll into the lobby of the Pierre may be enough for Midwesterners like Fitzgerald, but they're not much to offer those for whom the promise of maps is an emptiness that cannot be colored red, or green, or white. Kurtz is alive and well in the pastel ennui of Santa Barbara.

Maybe that's why even the most casual visitor senses something mystical about the sheer magnitude of place here. Despite the hotels of the rich that face the ocean like Monopoly markers, I move into the inviting emptiness the way I imagine men on this coast moved hundreds of years ago – warily treading in time. People don't stroll in California, they just push their bodies from one space to another.

"They *drive* to visit neighbors fifty yards down the road." Maybe so. But walking is a different religion in California – liberty and equality in each step, a hint of sex on the drift of wind. Walkers in the city, walkers in the golden land: Middle-aged Ohio businessmen dreaming the sexy dreams of youth, Kansas housewives spinning like whirling dervishes on skateboards, forty-year-old surfers gazing over an ocean immeasurably weirder than Nathanael West thought.

"You be a whore, lady?" The question hurled like a knife from a black teenager, Raiders cap turned on his head, unlaced sneakers a defiance of the light breeze that springs out of this cool August afternoon. Quizzically approaching the bedraggled woman nestled against a marble cornerstone of an empty glass office tower. Sunday in L.A., and Watts folded behind them like a clenched fist.

The woman touches a wooden crutch casting a shadow as if it were the blade of a sundial. Flat Indian face woos the feverish beggar in his bright eyes. Thin fingers caress the crutch, liquid eyes float to the dirty rolls of surgical stocking bandaging her left foot. An unbound Torah scroll of a face loosens in the breeze. She smiles, he smiles, each radiant in

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the City of Our Lady, Queen of Angels. In August, 1993, what is intended by smiles in L.A.? How rob what is already emptied of substance?

Is she one more L.A. whore dying of AIDS or a down-on-her-luck Aztec princess? The eyes of a dancer before dying? Or a counterfoil to this teenager's liquid pools? These dying generations in their need are the true degradation of the democratic dogma. The scene might be unrecognizable to Brooks and Henry Adams, aristocrats of their own imaginations mired in an eighteenth-century Massachusetts that never existed, yet no state has given more to that dogma than California has. Two states, the voice on NPR admonishes. North and South. Two, three, a hundred. It doesn't matter. All of California shares in my imagination of the place. East, North, South – palm tree or giant redwood, cactus or Douglas fir, mountain or desert or ocean, they blend into the unfinished map in my heart.

Twain, Steinbeck, London, Bierce, Stegner, ponderous Frank Norris – the sentences of California writers stab at the open air with a vigor denying that mere language can bring grace to American life. Then why is it that writers never seem fully formed here, as if words were the stepchildren of circumstance? California never did much for literary style. Henry Miller could have lived in Big Sur another forty years and he would still be a New York-Paris writer. In California but never really of it, his style molded by streets in which space is a question mark.

The sentences of California writers pose like bodybuilders at Muscle Beach or Hollywood actors melding into age as if prepped by central casting. California writers begin in the open air, a truth evident to Edmund Wilson as he took himself from a decade-long immersion in Marxism to the West Coast more than fifty years ago. *To The Finland Station* finished, Wilson took the measure of *The Boys in the Back Room*. What had they paid for all that fog and sun?

"All visitors from the East know the strange spell of unreality which seems to make human experience on the Coast as hollow as the life of a troll-nest where everything is out in the open instead of being underground." But is it "the strange spell of unreality" one feels in San Francisco or L.A.? I feel that in the Harlem I taught in for thirty-one years, as I felt it on a gloriously clear mid-October day in 1978, driving through a nineteenth-century New England mill town converted into warehouse malls housing boutiques that sold cultural bric-a-brac, iron and oak school desks with glass inkwells for people who no longer need pen or ink. It's Easterners who insist on fantasy. Disneyland was made for us, not for California's "strange spell of unreality."

What I feel in California are the swell of prospects I am told have

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disappeared from American life, the pull of the crashing surf as one looks down from the high curves of California One. "But you've never lived there!" a college friend who left the golden land after twenty years to return to New York's Greenwich Village insists, voice raw with self-righteousness. She feels betrayed by California. How do I respond to so virulent a victimization? Do I tell her that I never take my tourist's leave without betting my dollar on Twain's jumping frog? That is not what Wilson meant by "the strange spell of unreality" either.

In the window of a Madison Avenue print shop, a framed blow-up of a *New Yorker* cover. Manhattan avenues muscle the Pacific Coast, a sliver of land slipped like an afterthought into consciousness. The cartoon map reminds me for some reason of the subway gratings I fished with bamboo pole and chewing gum, a New York child's search for wealth. And now New Yorkers contemptuously wink at a nation caught between coasts like a worm in a bird's beak. A cartography in which scorn speaks not volumes but a strict party line. Besieged by the passing of power, we remove ourselves from a nation. With the Met and MOMA, who needs the gray Pacific swells?

The poster an itch I want to scratch in public. It's not snobbery but fear of the world closing in that creates humor from geography. Maps are the work of visionaries. The Manhattan avenues comprising the map's focus are a New York fantasy. We are European Americans, while Californians can remain oblivious to Europe's very existence.

Forty-three by the time I first went there, I take no pleasure in the mawkish chorus bewailing California's fate today. Our crippled giant has been hit so hard over the past seven or eight years that it has come to resemble a club fighter answering the bell on instinct alone. Survival his sole triumph, he can only hope that if his luck is equal to his courage, he will outlast this beating with dignity.

The riots after the first Rodney King verdict, the contraction in the defense and aerospace industries, the San Francisco and L.A. quakes that left nerves frazzled with the threat of the Big One to come, the mushrooming traffic jams, the illegal immigrants swarming over porous borders to raise heated ethnic and racial temperatures – its power and singularity under siege, California dreams of past glories as it takes its beating. Only the rest of America isn't doing very well either. The Soviet decline has not created that much-heralded peace dividend. The nation is irritable, compartmentalized, its hard times feeding a raspy uneasiness with California's woes.

As if California's decline were deserved, its troubles not economic

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but spiritual, the rest of America watches it disintegrate. A good deal of sympathy exists for the ways in which God or fate has been sticking it to California.

Even nursing its wounds, California earns no compassion from us. Its troubles merely leave other Americans smirking.

Three decades ago, California replaced New York as the most populous and powerful state in the nation. Now it has replaced it as the place Americans love to hate. Where dislike of New York was limited to the city, dislike of California runs from San Diego to Crescent City, from Death Valley to Eureka. The one topic guaranteed to give retirees from Akron or Butte even greater pleasure than the woes of New York is California's demise. Maybe it shouldn't surprise me, but it does. Orthodoxy is ugly – and California-bashing has become a true American orthodoxy.

Trapped in discontent, Californians now look on in disbelief as their suntanned golden children flee the golden land. Years ago, every schoolchild knew that the rise of California was *the* American success story, to be recited with the same kind of worshipful familiarity as Columbus's discovery of America (before that event was transformed into imperialist demonism). The rise of California reflected American ambition and optimism. The golden land's golden land, the future of California glowed with assurance.

Inevitably, economic power turned into a struggle for cultural hegemony. California, not New York, provided the beat to which Americans marched in the 1960s and 1970s. Now a sense of bewilderment as thick as the navel oranges hawked at roadside dominates the entire state. California disaster stories are so common they threaten to become a distinct genre. *The New York Times* runs a three-part series on the state's problems; analysts on PBS discuss its future in the somber voices one expects to hear at a convention of morticians. Mere paranoia? Eastern jealousy? Or is the staid Gray Lady's fix on California in decline intended as relief from New York's own hard times, like the Yiddish comedian's, "And you think *you* have troubles?"

That sun-spangled, fog-shrouded land has been a beacon of success for so long that it is difficult to fix on it as victim. A rock-strewn coast against which the rest of us allowed envy, aspiration, and ambition to wash owed its appeal to the myths it served. California was where we could begin again, our own ultimate America. It wasn't by accident that as many of the friends I grew up with in a working-class Bronx neighborhood in the 1950s ended up in L.A. and San Francisco as in Long

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Island or Westchester. One of them tells me of a 1980s California reunion of alumni of De Witt Clinton, a Bronx high school. From San Diego and Sacramento, hundreds of middle-aged men converge on a posh Beverly Hills hotel – lawyers, writers, physicians, actors, perfumers, fashion designers, comedians – once of the Bronx and now of the golden land.

The wages of success are sin in California. Or at least the prospect of sin. They had left the Bronx to find success in the golden land, but it wasn't high school days they wanted to celebrate. It was their own flight into America, measured not by distance but by the spiritual gap between coasts. Here was the graph on which they might display the psychological light years they had traveled. "De Witt *C*. . . !" the middle-aged men sang – only the C was for California, not De Witt Clinton.

Those of us who didn't migrate to California shared the assumptions of those who did. If we mocked them, our envy was always greater than we could admit. Maybe that's what disturbs us about California's decline. Maybe that's why, despite our scorn, we never believed the party would end.

In the summer of 1977, I was living in New Mexico. I used to explore its dark mountains, driving from Albuquerque to Santa Fe or Chimayo or into one of the small Hispanic villages peppering northern New Mexico like chiles hung out to dry on the stucco walls. One afternoon, on a twisting mountain road near Taos, I spotted a car with a bumper sticker that read, "Don't Californianate Colorado!"

A puzzling notion – the idea of re-making Colorado into L.A. or San Francisco or Eureka. Was there a nation-wide plot to "Californianate" Aspen or Steamboat Springs? I doubt it. There was only California matched against American paranoia. People in Denver (and Racine and Butte and Eugene) envied the ease with which Californians accepted their own primacy. The state assumed its ascendancy was as natural as coastal fog or desert sun. It wasn't Colorado alone that would turn California into the new American whipping boy.

The sole virtue of L.A., mocked New York's Woody Allen, was to permit a right turn on a red light. We snickered as we told each other Woody was right, L.A. wasn't a "real" city. No neighborhoods, no sense of community. All California cities (except San Francisco, which we New Yorkers romanced into a vision of our own lost paradise in the 1950s) were lifeless and plastic. How could anyone live in a state where the salads were more "creative" than the people?

A puzzle to those who had gone west. As Marx and James and

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Fitzgerald had tried to teach us, it is rarely necessary for the rich to prove the depths of their virtue. The rich are *rentiers,* and the rest of us merely beg for a place at their table. "You have to take what the landlord gives," my mother used to tell her two sons. Post-war California knew that it alone was America's rich landlord.

Its decline is statewide, but California's problems are most clearly visible in L.A. For a New Yorker who is always surprised at how much genuine affection he feels for the city, there is a grimness to L.A. now, a tawdriness that wraps the city in familiarity. L.A. is enough like New York so that even poor Woody might feel secure there. Angelenos are now as *angst*-ridden as the people who line up in Zabar's on Sunday mornings. In their petulant whine of discontent, one detects the rising note of urban breakdown, too close to a New Yorker's bone to be ignored.

From the moment I first flew there in 1977 to take my ten-year-old son to Disneyland, L.A. was "real" enough for me. As it struggles with its future, the city seems not only on the verge of becoming the nation's polyglot urban center but also a prelude of twenty-first century America. One can despair of knowing it, yet still like and admire it. L.A. is so bent out of shape that its agony seems surreal. Even when it was prosperous and confident, it was never like other cities.

"A good part of any day in Los Angeles is spent driving alone," writes Joan Didion, our most trenchant California observer, "through streets devoid of meaning to the driver." Driving is *the* essential L.A. activity. It dominates focus, defines one's sense of the city, measures existence itself. One drives the freeways as if in a Laurel and Hardy movie, plunging downhill at breakneck speed, foot pumping useless brakes. The laughter loud and hysterical, one nervously awaits rescue. In Hollywood, deliverance is bound to come in the form of a haystack or a shallow lake. There are no other acceptable endings.

Only what movie *deus ex machina* can save California? Do we lay odds on the sizable political debt Bill Clinton owes the state? Do we ask the Wobbly ghost of Big Bill Haywood to return the promise of plenty to our Pacific paradise? "Workers of California, Unite! You Have Nothing to Lose but the Defense Industry!" Will a new Disneyland, planned on so vast a scale that fake earthquakes will not only shake like the real thing but merge into the real thing, return prosperity to our most singular state?

Its decline not yet a free fall, California seems more defined since its slide. When it was our American claimant, tourists came for scenery and

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fun in the sun. Oil derricks mixed with the vast fields of lettuce, the dramatic twists of California One defied coastal fog and sun, the brown Pacific rocks were wet with hope's lather. Big Foot wandered the redwood depths of imagination in a land filled with EST and Universal Studio tourists and sour-breathed Hare Krishnas begging at the L.A. airport – and in that California, innocence protected us from tragedy.

In the fat 1980s, its promise was our anticipation. Eager tourists came seeking new sensations, as my wife and I did in the summer of 1993, this time to explore the soft majesty of Yosemite. Colorado, Utah, Montana, New Mexico, Wyoming, Idaho – for years, we had searched American space. Yet nothing we had witnessed elsewhere approached Yosemite's grace. California stands singular even in its scenery. Mountain, ocean, forest and beach kiss the needle in the American vein.

Only Californians themselves are now dark and morose. In the past, people migrated here in fear and then moved toward a much-vaunted optimism, which explains why cults and private religions were able to flourish like wild mushrooms in a Russian forest. And now the landscape is stalked not by fantasy or myth or a technology able to bring fantasy and myth to life but by hard times and fear.

Even so, mile-high Denver goes into a provincial tizzy at the mere mention of L.A. And we New Yorkers still echo Woody's disdain, trying to rid ourselves of the suspicion that California's revival is just around the corner. The whiff of anxiety in our post-Cold War air suggests that its heralded decline may yet prove one more song-and-dance wink at the sun in a leg-kicking Busby Berkeley fantasy. Is that to be the final surprise – the roll of drums and blare of trumpets announcing the extravaganza's end as muscular surfers ride the crest of the wave into the Technicolor sunset?

In the bizarre priorities of life in L.A., cars are still "detailed" as earth and economy collapse. If the weirdness rumored to emanate from shrinking ozone layers is not the golden land's alone, then that God now sticking it to California is probably as baffled as the rest of us are by what is really happening out west. Maybe it's time for a new bumper sticker: "Don't Blame It *All* On California!"

Odd as it may sound, our coastal empire is still alive and breathing. Plumb its core and you find wackiness but little meanness of spirit. Even the jackboot Aryans hiding with assault rifles in the Humboldt Mountains aren't as mean-spirited as their Idaho and upstate New York cousins. They understand why tourists still come to Big Sur and San Francisco, seeking answers to the same questions that lured the Beats and EST devotees. German, Japanese, Spanish – the languages change, the

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quest for California remains.

Down-and-out and threatening to drown the country in its economic collapse, what California once was for America it now wants to become for the world – its gardens as real as its toads, its dinosaurs as horny as imagination allows.

Work is fleeing across all borders (outside San Francisco's Maritime Museum, an old longshoreman speaks of Harry Bridges and the ILA until booze lays claim to visions of underwater sweatshops beneath the Alcatraz shore), money is in short supply, the environment is choking people to death, and even fantasy is no longer a growth industry. Movies are now shot in South Carolina, theme parks and girlie shows pop up in Texas, the sexual and familial peccadillos of Michael Jackson are tabloid headlines in every supermarket in the country, and fashion in salvation grows as boring as fashion in vice.

"Out here, anything goes," one of those Bronx refugees, a friend "in the business," said to me a decade back. We were at breakfast in a hotel near Universal Studios. "Maybe because out here, nothing matters." As if on cue, a pot-bellied Telly Savalas – in open yellow polo shirt, blue shorts, and blue pedal pushers – escorts his old Greek mother across the marble floor, our dutiful Kojak taking Mama to breakfast in a California still hawking romance.

After a superb week, Harriet and I decide to leave Yosemite for San Francisco. On the drive north, my eyes drift from road to roadside. Sabre slashes of graffiti on California Ninety-Nine. Only these are humorous – unlike the lumpen scrawls raging against L.A.'s freeways, where rolls of razor wire guard exit signs as vigilantly as Cerebus guards hell.

We stop for coffee at a roadside restaurant. A red-faced truck driver yells at a tattooed blonde woman, "It's all shit!" Even for two enraged drifters, words are dumdums of intimacy. "Garth Brooks Ain't Goin' Down Till The Sun Comes Up!" "Helmets Kill!" California speaks.

Driving through Pixley, I read signs aloud. "Dead Pigs Don't Write Tickets! Shoot a Pig!" Old movies taunt reality, bins of endives and cucumbers rock the road in a hot bucolic breeze. Fantasies of tomatoes so red and juicy I can taste them explode in my mouth. Tom Joad is dead, and these scruffy motorcyclists with beards who ride single-file alongside me are his grandchildren – dirty hair streaming in the wind like drag queens strolling Berlin's Kufu.

Past Pixley, I maneuver to the front of the cyclists' unwavering line, then past trucks filled with rhubarb. I pass an oil rig hauled on a flatbed, like an Israeli tank sent down from the Golan. Then past the flashing blue light of an oversized pre-fab, purple FUCK slashed across the side.

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Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin. Long after the pre-fab is out of sight FUCK screams into the lush roadside growth of flowers. Purple, red, and white flowers mixing with a dense blue sky, all dripping with Pollack's agony of hope.

I sit in air-conditioned comfort in the rented Lincoln Town Car. Yosemite is behind me, lost in space if not in time. Condemned by envy, California embodies America's growth. It may be sliding into the sea, only it seems to me still the rich landlord of America's fat future.

Don't Californianate Colorado! I remember.

"You should only be so lucky!" I say aloud. My wife looks up, then frowns, as if driving is making me crazy.

But I am not crazy. I am simply driving north on Ninety-Nine on a hot August afternoon in 1993, filled with admiration for California on its way down. Harriet taps my shoulder, points to a not-yet graffitied sign announcing the turn-off for San Francisco. Nodding, I roll my window down before steering toward the exit. Even dying, California is best understood in the open air.

Coming in

Partisan Review

- Joseph Brodsky on Thomas Hardy
- Fiction by Aharon Appelfeld
- Susan Sontag on Danilo Kis
- Karen Wilkin: *At the Galleries*
- *The Rebirth of Melancholy* by George Konrad
- A Symposium: *Culture and Economy in Latin and Spanish America*
- *Le Vertige de Babel* by Pascal Bruckner

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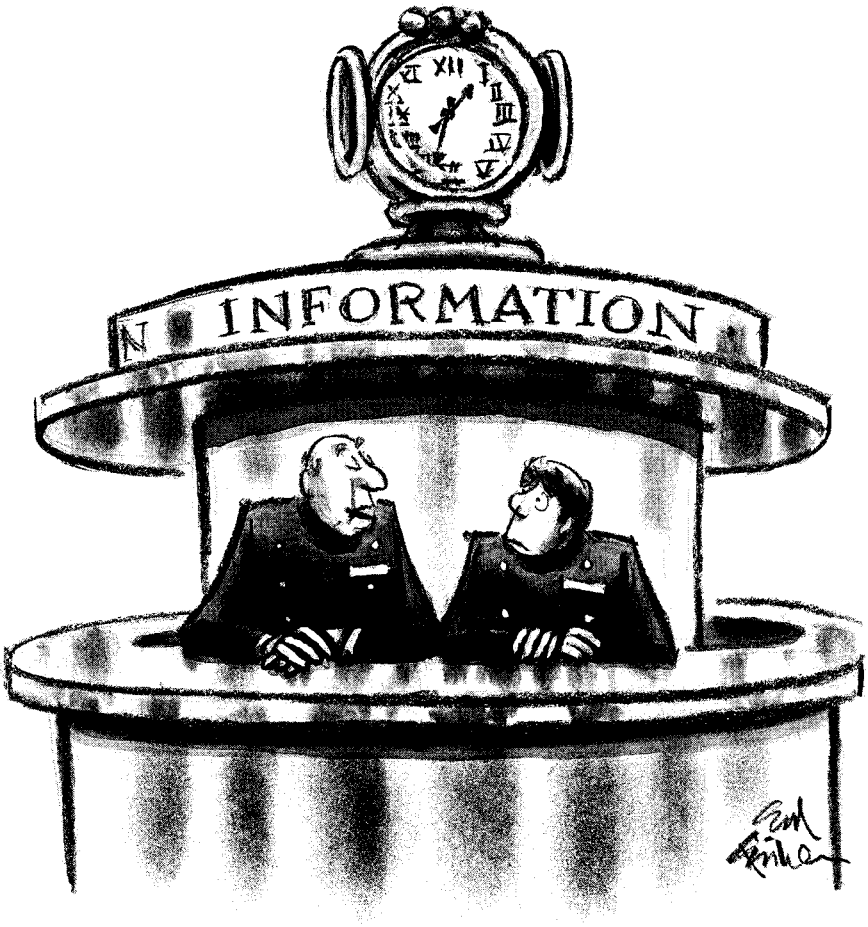

"Have no fear, young fella. We were in business here before this famous 'information explosion' came along, and we'll be in business here after it's gone."

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FICTION

NORA EISENBERG

The Domestic Front

My brother, Nick, was born nine months after our father went off to war, I nine months after he returned. Again and again, as children, we'd review these facts of our conceptions, amazed that there'd ever been a time, or two, when our parents stopped their fighting. For our father stormed back from Europe and into our lives still spoiling for battle. Nick says he remembers him marching in uniform up and down the front foyer, calling out commands. I don't remember that – just his eyes widening, his nostrils flaring, his voice rising to a crazy pitch, like a Kabuki actor. Just our terror as he slapped and slammed, chasing us around our Bronx apartment – the only, or closest, enemy he had left.

Before the war, our father had tried to join the Abraham Lincoln Brigade to fight Franco, but being only fourteen, was sent home with a pile of petitions to get signed. A couple of years before Pearl Harbor, he enlisted in the Army, eager for the inevitable conflict and his chance, at last, to fight fascism. He almost died twice, once at the beachhead at Casablanca, once in the hills above Naples. By the time we knew him, after so many years of causes and war, he was totally unfit for peace – his body and mind still mobilized for battle, both physical and moral.

"Petit bourgeois brats," he'd scream as he pursued us, his voice quivering with rage and righteousness. Drawing on the political rhetoric that had, no doubt, seen him through great battles, he'd yell how he'd defeated the Nazi monster only to be rewarded with us – "midget lumpens," "declassed debris of late-stage capitalism," "little bourgeois shits."

Our offenses, had our father been blessed back then with any moments of calm and reflection, would have seemed, even to him, pretty puny and probably funny. But shell-shocked into a state of steady agitation, he saw them as critical signs of a moral decay which could crumble civilization as we knew it, or could have known it, in the better, fairer

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world, he'd gone off to die for. The toys or dolls we occasionally abandoned on the floor, or the table we occasionally put off setting told him we were his moral enemies. And unwashed dishes, unmade beds, uncooked or undercooked meals confirmed that our mother was the major "lumpen instigator" of our "lumpen lowlife ways."

The truth was our mother was not at all a major lowlife as yet, but simply a distracted dancer with neither the organization nor inclination to clean or cook. A poor girl with no father and a machine-operator mother, she'd been a brilliant student and had won scholarships to progressive boarding schools, where she'd discovered left politics and a passion and talent for dancing. A poor boy, raised in a particularly vistaless working class home that worshipped tidiness, thrift, navy blue, and other markers of duty and order, our father fell in love with her for her free spirit, which he thought he could capture through marriage, but now condemned as so much "bourgeois self indulgence," vowing to rout it out.

In the early years, as he raged on, she'd cuddle with us on the couch, covering our ears to block his roars, making lion faces to amuse or distract us – or if he looked like he meant business, lead us, with her dancer's agility, in quick leaps and twirls to safety. Those years, even when she was his target, she seemed somehow above the battle, half girl, half pixie, flying around in blue jeans, jumping one-arm over fences, whistling through shapely unlipsticked lips, favoring candy and snacks over meals, especially the large candies and hot-dogs at the neighborhood movie theater, whose matinees she took us to every Saturday. Meanwhile the other mothers in our Bronx neighborhood wore red lipstick and rouge, dark sheathes over long corsets, and high-heeled pumps or wedgies, meeting their husbands at the door with a rye highball and a cup of salted peanuts while the meatloaf baked and the children ate carrot sticks at the kitchen table.

At lunchtime, the children of P.S. 56 went home, except for us, who, though poorer than most, would proudly meet our pretty mother at Bob's, our favorite luncheonette. Here, huddled in a red leatherette booth, we would wolf down BLTs and fries, cheeseburgers, and malteds, watching out the window as other kids marched dutifully home to peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and glasses of sad unflavored milk. That is if our mother had a little extra cash from the modern dance classes she taught for the Bronx Children's Dance Foundation to supplement our father's erratic employment. If not, weather permitting, we'd meet her in Mosholu Park for a picnic of sour cream, bananas, and miniature marshmallows.

My earliest memories take place in that stretch of park across from our house – with its ribbons of maple and dogwood, magnolia and lilac.

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Her weaving between the bushes and trees with one or both of us on her back. "Down horsy," we would shout and she would oblige, lowering us so that we could inspect whatever had caught our fancy on the romp. "Up, horsy," we would shout and she would take off again. That my mother's nickname was Tippy, after a wild horse by that name at one of the boarding schools she attended, seemed particularly fitting those early years, as we rode her around the park. In later years, though, as she finally sought relief, revenge, or both in drugs, "Tipsy" seemed more fitting, and privately we called her this to each other, missing our old Tippy with all our hearts.

The other mothers would watch from their benches, amused, as our mother galloped, not yet the target of the derisive gossip that would later haunt her. When she got winded, she'd light up a Camel and sit on the fence, or join the women, who regarded her still, in those early years, as a friendly elf.

Upstairs in our small apartment, if our father wasn't home, we were treated with equal license. Nick and I at an early age would cook and bake, as our mother supervised from the high-rise which doubled as the marriage bed and family couch, reading mysteries and smoking, cheering us on as we mixed and poured and spilled extravagant concoctions in the kitchenette along the living room wall. Even clean-up those years was wild and free. If we had a really big load of dishes and pots, we'd be allowed to wash them in the bathtub and even to get in with them – just as at night we'd be permitted to dive into a Tide-filled bath, which our mother had us share with the day's dirty clothes. Leaning into the water, bubbles rising up from her hands, she looked like the girl in the White Rock soda ads, beautiful, beneficent, refreshing.

Then suddenly she was gone.

After years of enduring his shouting and threatening and punching, years of excusing it – however accurately – as shell shock and battle fatigue, she suddenly stopped excusing and retreating, and abandoning her earlier forms and turning into an impressive warrior herself, she began fighting him. Later on we realized amphetamines and barbiturates had spearheaded her metamorphosis, shooting her full of the nerve and stamina she needed to do battle with such a formidable enemy as our father. But back then, we didn't know what was happening. Just that a major new drama was unfolding before our eyes.

Now when our father screamed, "I'm going to kill you," she no longer grabbed us and ran, but laughed wildly, as if he'd just said something terrifically amusing.

And then she'd say things she'd never said before. Like: "Oh, really? You just do that, big hero." And then she'd jump up and down before

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him, like she was doing a jitterbug.

Usually, for a while, they'd circle each other, snarling.

"You two, stop it," Nick and I would say in unison, shocked to see her bouncing around with him, instead of dancing off with us to a safe corner. "Come on, Dad. Come on, Ma," we'd call.

But then, more often than not, despite our pleas, they'd make contact: a slap, a hold, a roll on the floor. He above her, swearing to battle till death, she below responding with furious laughter and well-aimed spit.

Usually, after a couple of rounds, we'd manage to pull them apart. And they'd glare at each other from opposite sides of our kitchen table, where the fights generally began, breathing deeply like prize fighters, Nicky and I, red-eyed referees, standing between them.

Sometimes, after one of these events, he'd leave for a day or two.

"My wife doesn't respect me," he'd call, as he marched out the door. "An intolerable situation when a man's wife doesn't respect him" – shocked and wounded evidently by our mother's change in style.

"Leave, big brave hero," she'd call back. "After pummeling a woman and her children." And then weary from battle, oratory, and whatever barbiturates she'd managed to charm from neighborhood pharmacists, she'd sink, physically and rhetorically. "Oh, just get out and drop dead, you little fuck," she'd say, barely holding her chin up with two hands.

Sometimes the fights began when we were asleep or should have been. We'd hear the warm-up, the thumps, then finally the call to help: "Children, your father is murdering your mother again." And then we'd go in, and pull them apart.

"Feel better, big hero?" she'd say, which would incite in him a sashay towards her again, some whimpers from us, from her that wild defiant laugh or a tossed shoe or book.

"For that, I'm going for the jugular," he would call then, widening his mouth, as if to bite.

"Oh, try," she'd scream. "Drink blood, hero."

Like junior social workers, Nick and I would spout out sad ineffectual clichés. "You two, try to see things through each other's eyes," we'd call to them as they glared at each other in horror and hatred. "Try not to provoke him, Ma," we'd say.

"Provoke him?" she'd laugh. "He's his own person. Right, big man?" she'd scream to him as if he were rooms away and not inches above her, mouth agape.

In time, with practice, she became his equal, even superior, in recklessness, vying with him for major billing and center stage. Then what an

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amazing show our parents put on. And what an attentive and loyal audience Nick and I were, fixed on their every word, watching carefully for proof of breathing and signs of breakage, still believing – though he never actually bit – that, without our intervention, our tearful calls from our seats for crucial intermissions, our mother's neck and life blood were in mortal danger.

Had we not been there to watch, or at least listen, would the show have gone on for as long and with as much intensity? Certainly towards the end of its run, when we'd reached our teens, it often seemed put on for our benefit. And as our resentment grew, more and more we ignored their shouts to us, letting them go on longer, entering the room later, sleeping through some putative "close calls." But in those middle years of our childhood, we were like a chorus at the side of the stage, crying for peace. And then once peace came, we laughed. For though it played to a small house, this was full theater, with timing and pacing, highs and lows, tears and laughter.

After a big fight, if he hadn't left, they'd make up, before us again, making a joke of it, mimicking each other's earlier performances, or moving on to something else they now treated as equally amusing – a neighbor's angry shouts to quiet down, the neighbor's stupid voice, or walk, or mother-in-law, even us, our terror. Once, after weeks of binges and battles, he carted her off to the emergency room of a nearby hospital with a renowned psychiatric service to "dry her out and fix her up." Nick and I sat alone at the kitchen table, relieved and scared, loving our mother, yet having come to fear her as much as we'd feared him. Fearing *for* her too, alone among strangers, wanting to die. Her most recent refrain.

We heard him at the door. Then we saw him enter the hallway, then the kitchen.

We stood to greet him, our lone guardian. We raised our arms to cry on him. And then *she* walked in.

"Surprise," they both screamed, laughing wildly, like quiz show winners.

I still remember that moment – catching my tears, releasing my laughter.

"They didn't want me," my mother said, wiping away tears, which always accompanied her heartiest hysteria, blowing her nose with joy, distracted from her sorrow by the car ride and drama.

"Serious stuff over there," my father said. "Serious illness."

And then they competed for our attention, describing and imitating the doctors and patients, people talking to themselves, singing to coffee cups, pointing to loved ones who hung in the air.

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"*Real* nuts," they agreed.

We laughed hard, Nicky and I, at times like this, rocking back and forth, our parents at our side.

In time I sensed danger everywhere, as violence, or my anticipation of it, spread like infection from my home to every part of my world – into our relatively gentle fifties neighborhood, across the city, out across to the other side of the globe. Those years, I walked around, looking above me, behind me, as if to detect ambush, walking gingerly, as if to escape the mines that might be planted anywhere. Some days I understood that the violence at home had made me jumpy, causing me to imagine peril where there was none. But other days, everywhere I went seemed truly precarious, with opportunities only for harm. Then I viewed our home not as the source of my worries but as the solution to life's essential condition – a kind of boot camp, training me for all the battles out there.

The neighborhood Catholic school, Saint Brendan's, dismissed its students fifteen minutes before our public school. This allowed the St. Brendan's boys to position themselves outside our school and greet us with pea shooters and rants about cowardly Jewish moneylenders killing Jesus Christ or brave Irish and Italian gangs killing Jews and other heathen trash. Some days they'd describe the prowess of the Fordham Baldies or the Golden Guineas, accounts that confirmed my view of the world and left me in a state of debilitating dread. The Baldies scalped you and killed you, or if you were lucky just scalped you, while the Golden Guineas' rituals of violence involved painting victims in gold paint "so the skin couldn't breathe." At night I'd lie in bed, one hand on my head, the other roaming my skin, half stock clerk, taking inventory of my endangered body parts, half supplicant, praying for a little more time with them.

When I dreamed those days, it was often about the bald-headed Fordham Baldies (supposedly they shaved their own heads to allow you to anticipate your fate) climbing through the fire escape window to claim my scalp. The Guineas scared me too, but less, for I felt I had outsmarted them by sleeping in socks so that even if they painted me, I could breathe through my soles. I tried to sleep in a kerchief, to save my scalp, but my parents wouldn't allow it. My mother, despite her natural playfulness, had an equally innate knack – probably sharpened by years of living with my father – for anticipating situations that could be physically dangerous – seeing from blocks away holes in construction site fences that children could fall through to their death, potholes that old people

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could trip in, breaking their back. Studying my scarf, she told me that it could tighten as I slept and strangle me. This had happened, she explained, to Isadora Duncan, one of her idols. But when I then tried to sleep in a shower cap, she said that it could slip on my face and smother me.

A terrible truth about both of my parents those days was that when they weren't busy suffering or inflicting torments, they sometimes could be amazingly sensitive, reaching out in the respite between battles in sympathies that were as potent as they were unpredictable and fleeting. Seeing me in my desperate get-ups, they each tried to reassure me that no one would come to get me. My mother went so far as to allow me to lock all our windows at night and to string, as an alarm, small silver bells across our fire escape, which she then helped me camouflage with sprightly red bows. My father, who had belonged to street gangs on the Lower East Side before he joined the Young Communist League, tried to reassure me by explaining how gangs worked then and now – gang versus gang, not gang versus little girl in bed. But I found all his reassurances less convincing than the St. Brendan's boys' descriptions.

It didn't help that waking in the middle of a fitful night, I came upon my father pacing the living room, smoking and sweating. He looked worried, not angry, so I walked up close to him and asked him what was wrong. As a boy, he said, he had pierced another boy's eye ball with a fountain pen, and some nights, remembering still, it was hard to sleep. Was he mean? I asked, suppressing a gag. My father shook his head. He was very nice. And I did that to that very nice boy with my Waterman's pen, just like that. Imagine that, just like that.

You were young, I said, to try to normalize things and comfort him and me, hearing, of course, even at that young age of nine or so, the hollowness of my remark, which my father must have heard too, for he just stood there dragging on his Lucky Strike, shaking his head, repeating, A nice boy with blue-gray eyes. Imagine.

Years later, as our father lay dying in a hospital bed, frail and loving, I thought often about the younger him, and one long vigil of a day, sitting at Nick's side, taking turns wiping our father's brow as he slipped away, I remembered the story about the boy whom my father had blinded, and asked my brother if he remembered too. Nicky did, but according to him, in other tellings, it seemed less certain that our father had hit the eye – maybe just the area near the eye – and maybe the boy wasn't such an angel but a tough who had held a broken bottle to our father's young neck.

Whatever version is true or closer to the truth, I'll never know. I know only that in the middle of that awful night my father offered his harsh version, which I accepted as one of the sad truths pouring into my

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life's foundation. If my own father could do that, without reason, to a nice boy, why couldn't the Baldies scalp and/or kill me, a nice girl? After that there was nothing my parents could say to comfort me, and bedtime remained for me a dreadful ordeal in which I'd frantically consider defensive strategies – scarves, caps, socks, sneakers. Sunglasses.

Years later I discovered, of course, that the Saint Brendan's boys' tales were largely made up. Over the years, comparing notes with Bronx cognoscenti more knowledgeable than I about our greatest gangs, I learned that the Baldies were indeed bald themselves but only cut you or killed you – no scalping; the Guineas were "golden" because they thought themselves dazzling and rare among the dregs of the borough. But back then, when I was eight and nine, I believed all of the Saint Brendan's boys' stories, which seemed to me objective statements of a terrible and likely fate.

And then there were the Russians. Wedged in with my worries about my father's eruptions, my mother's retaliations, the gangs' advances, were my anxieties about another front of attack – an air attack by the Russians. In anticipation, every day at school our teachers would tell us to take cover. "Take cover, class," they'd say, speaking lines from a mandated city-wide script, and we would dive beneath the oak desks, contorted and silent.

For my classmates, I'm sure, those were purely terrifying moments, as they prepared for what they believed to be likely invasion, bent in two, protected only by a slab of wood from the red bricks, which, along with flame and radiation, were sure to tumble in on them. For me, though, they were complicated and confusing. Both of my parents, anarchists characterologically and too disorganized to be Party members, were nonetheless, ideologically, communist sympathizers who did not believe for a second that the Russians were coming in any shape or form, by bomb or boot. I was uncertain what to think. Sometimes I believed my parents; sometimes I believed my teachers. At home, wanting domestic calm, I'd say things like, All they want is peace, the Russians. And if they were OK, my parents would pat my head. At school, above all, I wanted to believe what everyone else believed and to shed the association with my odd family. At school, then, I'd be the first to dive beneath the little desk, and there, watching kids kiss the crucifixes and medals and stars of David and mezuzahs that hung around their necks, I'd make my own gestures toward prayer. I'd bow my head and say things like, Please, God kill the Russians and keep us safe. And there in the dark room, in the darkened space at the bottom of the room, listening to the fast shallow breathing of my classmates, I'd feel myself freeze in terror and my own breath coordinate with theirs in small

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scared sips of air. Then I'd feel myself melt into a perfect peace, joyously united with my peers in common fears and purpose. But then I'd get all afraid all over again – of violence – not from the Russians now but from my "commie-loving" family, or at least Nick.

Nick, of course, followed the Party and family line. Naturally braver than I and finding his friends among the hooligans in Bronx Park, my brother did not care what the "deadbeats in the class" thought about him and would not participate in the take-cover drills, which "distorted the reality of the Soviet Union and diminished the dangers of the A bomb and radiation," as he liked to put it in speeches before the bathroom mirror. That I participated, and so eagerly at that, won me his contempt and wrath. I was a sell-out, who left him alone in a one-boy campaign. In high school, organizing his juvenile delinquent friends in the neighborhood and his intellectual friends in our special high school, my brother led a city-wide boycott that stopped the drills once and for all. But at Public School 56, the Bronx, the lone rebel, he was sent regularly to detention – an oak chair outside of the principal's office, which he would squirm his antsy body around on, extending his legs into the hallway to trip the well-behaved monitors streaming between classroom and office with records and notes. I was a devoted and responsible school monitor too, but it was torture for me to perform my duties after a drill, aware as I was of the kicks and curses that awaited me from Nick, and the ridicule of my classmates for being the sister of the school outcast.

"Did you hide, you goody-goody collaborating shithead?" he'd call to me as I passed, pretending I didn't know him.

One day, I walked too close to Nick, allowing him to grab my arm. As I tried to pull myself free, he said, "You know, eventually you're going to realize what a friend we all have in the Soviet Union and what a little moron you are."

I wanted to say, You're the moron, getting yourself into trouble. But, of course, I didn't want to be seen speaking with him. And besides only half of me believed he was wrong to do what he had done. Half of me was proud of his rebellion. So I said nothing.

"You're a pathetic little people-pleasing moron," he said. "A coward to cowards."

The principal must have been listening on the other side of her office door. For suddenly the door flew open and she was standing over Nick, bearing down at him with a wooden pointer in her hand.

"Apologize," she said. "At once."

"Absolutely not," Nick snickered.

"I said apologize. At once. Or you'll see who's a coward."

"And I said absolutely not. I say it to you and I say it to your

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weapon." He began laughing, pointing at her pointer.

"That's it," she said, lifting the pointer high and hitting him on the shoulder. "You deserve that and more. For your attitude towards individuals and country."

Nick said, "You know, violence is often the mark of the desperate. I pity you."

I can still see her beefy red face, her furious rising bosom, her shaking hand dipping into her neckline to find a crumpled tissue with which to wipe her sweating brow.

"Lucy, you'd better tell him to say he's sorry," she said, turning to me.

"Nicky," I whispered obediently, "Tell Mrs. O'Shea you didn't mean what you said."

My brother stared ahead silently, dramatically rubbing his shoulder.

"And tell him to tell you he's sorry too," she said. "You're a nice child and don't deserve him."

"Nicky, please," I said. "Just apologize to her. Not to me." I whispered, "Or else I'm afraid she'll hit you again."

"I hit no one," she said. "You never saw me hit a soul."

She winked at me, with nervous little blinks, as if to say, I know I can count on you – you're not like him. I looked away to Nick, who still wouldn't look at me.

His skin was brown and smooth, his eyes narrow slits of defiance. He looked like the Indian on the nickel, and I felt the terrible pain of his rejection.

Suddenly I heard myself saying, "You did so hit him."

"I hit no one," Mrs. O'Shea shouted, sweating hard now and holding her tissue to her brow like a compress.

"You hit him," I shouted back, surprised by the boom of my voice. "You hit my brother. You did, you did."

Throwing my arms around Nick's neck, I began to cry. "Did she hurt you? Did she hurt you, Cocoa?" I said. How good it felt to call him by the special affectionate name, in honor of the color of his skin, we brought out for the tender family moments we still sometimes managed. How good it felt to hear him say, "Watch the shoulder, Missy," calling me by my own special family name, short for Miss Mousy, in acknowledgment of my fear and scampering – which now, holding my brother's strong neck, seemed worlds away.

The next moment we were standing arm in arm and walking from the school to the avenue. At the phone booth at Bob's luncheonette we called our mother, who met us. She told us she was proud that we'd stuck together, and rewarded us with double hot fudge sundaes. Then she walked us back to school, where she told Mrs. O'Shea she'd kill her,

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or have her arrested, or both, if she ever touched another child.

With us standing beside her, she said, "Now you say you're sorry, Mrs. O'Shea. Tell my children that you're very sorry."

Mrs. O'Shea, her red face now white, stared ahead saying nothing.

"Can't hear you," my mother said.

"I'm sorry," Mrs. O'Shea said weakly.

"Say it like you mean it," my mother snarled.

I'd never seen my naturally good-natured mother fight with anyone besides my father, but she was licking her lips, a sign of pill-popping, and for a brief moment, half panicked, half proud, I wondered if she was going to laugh and spit in our principal's face. But she just glowered until Mrs. O'Shea, her voice a little louder now, said, "I'm really very sorry."

On the way home, as we approached the Parkway, our mother began to cry. Our father wouldn't be home, she said. They'd fought and he'd taken off. Nick and I were used to this and beginning to grow indifferent, but we patted our mother's head. We were proud of her, we said – she was strong, she'd stood up to O'Shea, she'd be OK without him. We'd come to love him at times, but we wanted him gone, I guess, so our old Tippy might return. But the next week he was back, and the war, of course, was on again.

Sometimes now I try to imagine a better time for them. Though both of them are long dead, I sometimes strain to imagine some time of real peace – consolation that between their impoverished births and early deaths they scraped together more than the awful fighting.

I imagine the end of the war, the first breaks of peace. His very first day back on home ground. I see them returning to the little apartment, walking through the door arm in arm, him in his uniform, tired but dashing with his green eyes, bronze skin and blue-black hair. She's tired too but content for the first time in years. I imagine her in a gray suit, the pearl gray wedding suit she wears in their one wedding picture, her hair in a low bun with wisps falling at her temples, ready to resume the honeymoon that was interrupted by the World War. She kisses her mother, who has watched sleeping baby Nick while she's gone down to the pier, kisses the baby, and then turns to him and smiles that toothy, open Rita Hayworth smile. In the two and a half years since he's been gone, she's grown increasingly nervous, and many nights, she's stayed awake with visions of death and dismemberment dancing in her mind. But now seeing him before her, his khaki shirt tight against his firm beating breast, she suddenly feels that everything will be wonderful. He does too, and smiles back, his shy, sly smile, which both of them say is a

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lot like Cary Grant's. Then he takes her hand and swings it like young lovers did in the nineteen forties to show they were happy. And then, for a while, they are happy.

Was there ever such a time? Did they ever know a peace together that lasted any longer than a session of sex? There was that synchronized laughter between battles, of course, that nervous, wild wind-up or wind-down laughter. But peace?

These days, especially if I'm with Nick, one memory looms above all others. Not the day the police climbed up the fire escape to interrupt a particularly dramatic "balcony scene" our parents were performing, nor the time she burnt his uniforms and medals in the kitchen sink, nor the winter night she sweated out streams of drugs in a hospital room and we thought she'd die but couldn't find him anywhere, nor when years later, mellowed by time and humbled before her power, he died contrite in our arms and she, having had enough, wouldn't come to say good-bye. Nor when she died, screaming and cursing like a shot soldier.

No. What comes to mind again and again for both of us is a scorching June day at Orchard Beach. In the blistering heat, we sit on our blanket listening to a portable radio. It's 1953 – Nicky's ten and I'm seven. We're sure of this because the Rosenbergs are supposed to be electrocuted that day. We've been kept out of school so we can all be together.

More or less the same ages as the Rosenberg kids, Nicky and I spend a lot of our free time thinking about them and writing them letters which offer sympathy and schemes for springing their parents from jail. Weekly we write something along the lines of: We know how hard it must be for you. Your parents, like our parents, just want a better world for the working class and human race – and now this. We offer to meet them down at Penn Station and take the train to Sing Sing with one of Nick's knives or a gun, for we're sure that if push comes to shove, we'll find our father's war pistol in one of the heaps at the back of one of our closets. Actually, Nick writes the letters, and I, a prodigious speller, proofread. Mostly, that year, though, I become religious, and secretly pray. That our parents be taken away from us so that we too can get to live with a nice new family. That I be forgiven for my awful thoughts about our mother and father, who mean no harm, and whom I love more than life. That Julius and Ethel get to live a long natural life, everything returning to normal for them and the children.

That day the heat is too intense for much movement or thought, and Nick and I lie there on the blanket, trying halfheartedly to fight with each other about who will walk to the snack stand for frozen malteds – the beach's name for soft ice cream. In the middle of our stu-

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porous negotiations, we realize that our parents are gone. Then we see them, out in the bay, their backs to us, their arms entwined, their heads touching. They aren't moving, and they look like they can't.

"Are they dead?" I ask Nick, for, of course, death's on my mind.

In contempt, my brother throws some sand at my face. "You're not dead if you're upright. Look, moron, they're standing up.

I don't say, Maybe the Rosenbergs would be dead and sitting up. I say, "They're weird. They're not moving."

The next second we're both running to them, calling to them. When they turn, we see that their faces are red and wet with tears.

"They're dead?" we say together, meaning, of course, the Rosenbergs.

Our parent shake their heads. No. There's been a stay. The Rosenbergs won't be killed that day.

"So why are you crying?" I ask.

"We're happy," my mother says.

"We're very happy," our father says, opening his arms so we can join the huddle. "Justice has been done."

The perfect sun, the white sand, the water cheerful with popsicle sticks bobbing like little boats, my parents connected like Siamese twins, my father opening his arms to us. Happy. Very Happy. Justice done.

How I still remember that day – the unexpected peace and possibility descending like grace. The day they stayed the Rosenbergs' execution a week before they died.

Nick says we celebrated by eating lobster rolls at the fish stand at the end of City Island. I don't remember that – just the feel of all our bodies squished together with bay water and sand, that sweet feel of reprieve as we hug each other tight.

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LAUREN SMALL

Imaginary Houses

Jeanie and I were playing our water game. I dragged the hose from the house to the top of the driveway and turned it on. The water ran down through the dirt and sand in little rivulets: a web of interconnecting streams. Gradually the dirt washed away, revealing tiny ravines studded with shiny bits of grey and pink and white gravel. At the bottom of the driveway, the dirt formed a wide, muddy delta that spilled over the sidewalk and into the street.

Jeanie made a town along the banks of one of the rivulets. She piled up some gravel for a school and, in the corner where the rivulet bent, scratched out a playground in the dirt with a stick. I built a row of grass houses near a cliff of pink rock and watched as bits of twigs and bark, a schooner and a yacht, sailed past.

I was not supposed to be doing this. The last time I did Rhoda, my stepmother, shouted from the doorway, "You get out of that mud." And then my father came through the garden gate and said, "I told you not to waste water like that."

But that was on a weekend, and my father and Rhoda were home. Today they were at work, so the only person I had to watch out for was my brother, Ricky. He was liable to come sneaking around the corner of the house, grab the hose, and send Jeanie and me running, wet and shrieking, into the street. But the last time I checked on Ricky, he was still asleep. All summer long, ever since we arrived at our father's house, he'd been perfecting sleep, like an art. Sometimes he made it until the middle of the afternoon.

So I let the water run. I imagined I was floating in its cool currents instead of suffering in the heat, in the heavy, humid air that rose off the nearby lake – so different from the thin, dry mountain air I was used to at home. I dug out a trench with a stick, a canal connecting two of the rivulets. Jeanie made a barge out of bark. She was lucky; no one bothered about what she did. Her mother worked and her grandmother, who was supposed to watch over her, never left the house. She was blind and sat upstairs all day, listening to the radio, mostly big band music and singers with low, husky voices. Even now, as I worked, I could hear the sound of her radio, tinny, distant, drifting down from an open window on the second floor of Jeanie's house.

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I helped Jeanie load her barge with leaves, but I was already tiring of the game. I hated Jeanie. I hated her stringy brown hair, the stains on her blouse, and the way she smelled, moist and rotted, like the compost pile at the bottom of my father's garden. She was the kind of girl I prided myself on never playing with at home. At home, I left girls like her playing alone in the dirt while I hung around the playground fence with my friends, practicing handclaps or counting off lowsies and highsies with my Chinese jump rope. But there was no one else to play with at my father's house. "How lucky you are," Rhoda had said when I arrived, "to have a girl just your age living next door."

I kicked the hose and the tiny rivulets with their perfect clean washed gravel turned into a smear of brown mud. Jeanie's school and the rest of her town sank into the muck. She looked up at me, her yellow-brown eyes opened wide, but she knew better than to say anything.

"I'm sick of this game," I said.

Jeanie wiped her muddy hands on the back of her shorts. "We could play berry sticks," she said.

We had a collection of berry sticks under the porch. They were long and smooth, stripped free of bark. We threw them into the mulberry tree in front of my father's house and picked up the berries that got knocked down. But I didn't feel like eating the sour-sweet mulberries. I didn't feel like doing anything with Jeanie today. "I'm going inside," I said.

"Wait," Jeanie said. "I'll show you something."

Jeanie had already shown me several things that summer. She took me down the alley and showed me an abandoned shed with an old mattress and a pair of men's pants in it. She showed me the best places to find empty bottles to turn into the supermarket for nickels, and how to scrounge for half-smoked cigarettes in the vacant lot at the end of the block. But nothing like that appealed to me now. "Forget it," I said. I climbed the porch steps.

Jeanie's voice came up, high and insistent, behind me. "It's in my house."

Slowly I turned around. Ever since I arrived at my father's, I'd been secretly watching Jeanie's house. I'd seen her mother go off to work in the morning, with her dark red hair piled up high on the top of her head and her tight skirts curving under her rear. And I'd seen her come home in the evenings, with her bag slapping against the side of her leg and a cigarette dangling between her fingers. I'd seen the way the moonlight made their grey slate roof look slick, like it was wet, and I'd watched their cat slinking under the porch at night.

But I'd never gone inside. Jeanie wouldn't let me. "I can't," was all she'd say when I asked.

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Still, I hesitated. What if Jeanie's grandmother came downstairs, and she wasn't wearing her dark glasses, and I saw her, and her eyes were all white and bloody, like someone had scratched them out?

But then, as if she'd read my mind, Jeanie said, "My grandmother's not home. My mother took her to the doctor." So when she turned and walked down the sidewalk, I followed her.

At home there was an old brick house a few blocks away that the neighborhood kids said was haunted. Supposedly if you walked past it at night bats would fly out and get tangled up in your hair. But Jeanie's house made that house look tame. The windows in the back were boarded up, the front porch listed off to one side, and the yard was littered with weeds and trash. My father complained about it all the time. Once he even got the city inspector to come out. But all Jeanie's mother had to do was replace a few missing shingles on the roof.

We followed a path in the dirt around an old lion-clawed bathtub that sat in her backyard and went in through the kitchen door. The sink was full of dirty dishes and there was a pot caked with dried-out spaghetti on the counter. Flies hovered over the trash. The house smelled moist and musty, like overripe fruit: Jeanie's smell.

Past the kitchen was a room that I supposed was meant to be the dining room, only it didn't have any furniture, just brown cartons taped shut and stacked three or four high. It looked like somebody was moving in or out, except the boxes were covered with dust, as if they'd sat there, undisturbed, for years. I followed Jeanie through a narrow pathway that ran between them. I imagined her grandmother feeling her way along the path, her thickened, yellowed nails scratching along the sides of the cardboard, her slippered feet shuffling across the floor.

Beyond that was the front room of the house. The windows were closed, covered with heavy brown curtains that let in only a pale, murky light. The air was thick and stifling and smelled of stale tobacco. Most of this room was full of boxes, too. But they'd left enough space along one wall for a couch with carved trim, an armchair, and a small round table. The table was covered with a stained ivory cloth that hung to the floor.

Jeanie knelt next to the table, picked up the cloth like a skirt, and pulled out a cigar box. She held the box so I couldn't see, rummaged in it for a while, then shrugged, and held it out to me. I crept closer and looked in. A dead bird. A broken piece of green glass. Some rocks with bits of quartz in them. A Kennedy fifty cent piece. Junk.

"This is it?" I said. "This is what you dragged me over here to see?" I shook my head; I couldn't believe she could be so dumb. "I'm going back," I said.

"Wait." Jeanie slammed the lid shut on the cigar box. "There's

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something else." She shoved the box back under the table and searched again. Impatiently, as I waited, I looked here and there. Slowly it dawned on me that Jeanie's house was an exact copy of my father's, the same floor plan, only in reverse. In my mind I erased the boxes and the furniture, and it all came clear: that was the wall my father had his sofa on, over there was the teak cabinet, in that corner sat the leather swivel chair . . .

"Here." Jeanie held something out to me in the palm of her hand. As I took it, she looked away.

It was a small photograph framed in a gold locket. In the dim light I squinted at the picture, which was in black and white, scratched and faded. It showed a man standing in front of an old-fashioned car with streamlined fins. He was wearing a white open collared shirt and a pair of dark pants. He was grinning like the car was something special, or maybe he thought *he* was something special. I looked harder. Maybe he was somebody famous, a movie star, like Paul Newman or Steve McQueen. But it was nobody I recognized. It was probably somebody Jeanie didn't even know, the picture that came with the locket when it was bought.

"It isn't anybody," I said to Jeanie.

"Yes it is." She looked at me, her eyes narrowed, their yellow-brown color deepening to a muddy smear.

"Then who?" I challenged.

She hesitated.

"See," I said triumphant. "Nobody." I turned to go.

Then she blurted, "It's my father."

That was impossible. Jeanie didn't have a father. I was sure of this; I'd never seen a man enter or leave her house. Not once. Not one single male. Besides, even if she had a father, it wouldn't be *this* man. I looked at the locket again. Nothing could possibly connect the self-assured, handsome man in the photograph with this miserable girl. "You're lying," I said.

Jeanie's eyes narrowed even further and her mouth opened wide in protest, showing the pointy tip of her tongue and a chipped front tooth. Then all at once she froze, a look of terror on her face. There were voices at the front door. "Just a minute, Mother," someone said.

Jeanie reached for the locket. "Give it back," she moaned. "No one's supposed to see it."

"You want it?" I taunted her. "Then come and get it." I clenched my hand in a fist and jerked the locket up high, out of her reach.

"Now," she hissed, desperate. Her face was pinched and pale, a pigeon's face.

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I laughed, waved the locket in front of her face then snatched it away before she could grab it. Then, just as the key turned in the lock, I said, "Have it, stupid," and smashed the locket to the floor. It sprung open and skidded under the couch. Jeanie fell to her knees after it and, as the door opened, I wheeled around and ran, as fast as I could, back through the kitchen to my father's house.

I double locked the doors behind me and collapsed against them, gasping for breath. A giggle rose in my throat, then another, until I was laughing, long peals of laughter that made my eyes water and my sides hurt.

Ricky came out of the kitchen, a carton of milk in his hand. "What's with you?" he asked. "Did the slime get you?"

"The slime" was his name for Jeanie. I straightened up, pushed the hair out of my face. "She loves you," I said. "She wants to be your girlfriend."

Ricky's lips curled in disgust. He turned away and chugged milk right out of the carton.

"Rhoda hates it when you do that," I said.

"So?" Ricky shrugged. "How's she going to find out?"

I almost said, "Because I'll tell her," but he knew I wouldn't.

I followed him back to the kitchen and made myself a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Ricky cocked his heels against the rungs of his chair – another thing Rhoda hated – and hunched over the sports section of the newspaper. I pulled the crusts off my sandwich and rolled them into a ball. "Jeanie doesn't have a father, does she?" I said.

Ricky didn't even look up. "Everybody has a father, stupid."

"I mean, she doesn't really have a father, does she?"

"Who cares?" He turned the page.

What if I was wrong and Jeanie *did* have a father? What if she had a handsome, rich father hidden somewhere? Someone to come and take her places whenever she wanted, to buy her things, and to pay attention to her. To scoop her up in his arms in the evening when he came home from work.

I thought about Jeanie. About her dirty fingernails. About the scab on her elbow that she picked at until the bright red blood bubbled up. No. It was impossible. She was lying. Her father was dead or gone. Either way, he had nothing to do with her.

I scraped the rest of my sandwich into the trash and washed my plate. Then I talked Ricky into a game of Monopoly. For the rest of the day the house was still, no sounds except for the dice clattering against the kitchen table and Ricky's gleeful shouts when I landed on Boardwalk. By the time our father came home, I was in debt for over

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four thousand dollars, but Ricky kept lending me money, just to keep me in the game.

Our father always came home first. He ran the dermatology clinic at the University Hospital, which was only a few miles away, around a bend in the lake. He drove the car to work, while Rhoda took the bus downtown, a forty minute ride. She worked at *Desire* magazine – in the news division, she was quick to add. Sometimes the bus was late and she didn't get home until dinner time. Then she poured herself a gin and tonic before she'd even changed out of her work clothes.

My father strode breezily into the kitchen and smiled at me. "How ya doin', toots," he said.

"Stop it," I said. "I hate it when you call me that."

But he wasn't listening. He was already at the refrigerator, rummaging around for a beer. He grumbled, muttered something under his breath about Rhoda, and how gin didn't need to be cold but beer did. Then a smile, a big sigh of relief, and he snapped the tab off a can of Blue Ribbon. He took the beer with him while he went upstairs to change. When he came back down, he was wearing a blue terrycloth hat, khaki shorts and canvas boat shoes with paint splatters on them. He took a fresh beer out of the refrigerator and shoved a six-pack in, to chill. "For good measure," he said to me with a wink.

For a minute he stared out the window at the lawn. Then he said, "Where's your brother? He was supposed to mow the grass today."

"I don't know." Somehow Ricky had slipped away from the kitchen table. Ricky always disapeared when our father came home. Usually he went upstairs to his room to read his Batman comics and *Mad* magazines. But once when Rhoda and my father were hollering for him, I found him in the attic, lying on an old mattress and staring at the rafters.

"He'll mow the grass as long as he's living in *this* house," my father said. It sounded ominous, but he just picked up his beer and went outside.

I followed him. First he went around front. For a minute my throat tightened; you could still see the lines in the driveway where the water had run and the muddy spot at the bottom. But he just looped the hose over his shoulder and carried it around back, to water his vegetable patch at the bottom of the yard. The vegetables were surrounded by rusty chicken wire. I followed him to the edge, but I knew better than to go in. My hands sunk deep in the pockets of my shorts, I stood outside the wire, watching him. My father balanced the hose against his hip and tipped the beer can up to his mouth. The sun glinted off the silver bottom of the can with white streaks that hurt my eyes. The air was

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heavy and hot; sweat trickled down the inside of my legs.

"Don't you have anything better to do?" my father said.

I shrugged.

"Then you might as well make yourself useful and water these tomatoes."

Gingerly, I stepped in over the wire. I tried to walk between the vegetable rows like he did, but my foot slipped onto something green.

"Watch it!" he yelled. "The radishes!"

I jumped back and managed to reach the hose without any other mishaps. I aimed it at the roots of the tomatoes, as I had seen him do. But the water wavered, and some of the yellow blossoms fell to the ground.

"Not like that!" my father said. He grabbed the hose. I stared at the ground. The dirt was heavy and black, with white speckles. I imagined all the dead things that must be hidden in it, bits of worms and insects, rotting vegetables from last year's crop.

As my father walked up and down the vegetable rows, I followed close behind, putting my feet exactly in his footsteps. Once he turned around and almost tripped on me. "Jesus," he said. "Do you have to be so underfoot?"

Finally he was done. He put away the hose and marched up and down the yard, inspecting the flower beds. "The zinnias need weeding," he said. "See if you can stay out of trouble this time." I pulled out some green shoots growing around the purple blossoms but the flowers came up with them. "For chrissakes!" my father yelled, "the weeds, not the zinnias, the weeds!" He drained his beer, looked at the can with disgust. "Get me another one."

Rhoda was in the kitchen, mixing a gin and tonic. "I see baby boy has already started on his juice," she said, as I got a fresh beer. She was still in her work clothes; her briefcase was on the table next to an open bag of potato chips. "God only knows what we'll have for dinner. I didn't get to the market today." She took a box of spaghetti off the pantry shelf and rattled it; it was almost empty. "I don't know how your father expects me to go on like this without a car." As I headed towards the door, she said, "Ask him if he wants a steak."

There were two steaks in the freezer, special ones my father had ordered from Omaha. I'd heard him say how expensive they were and how he was saving them for a special occasion. I figured he meant he was waiting until the summer was over and Ricky and I had gone back home. When Rhoda served chicken, my father said white meat was for adults. I guessed steak was something children didn't get at all.

My father was spraying the vegetables with a white powder that stuck to the green leaves like a fungus. I handed him the beer. "Rhoda

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wants to know if you want steak."

"Steak." My father pulled the tab off the beer; his mouth turned down into a frown. Then he shrugged. "Whatever."

Dinner was late. First Rhoda had to defrost the steaks, then my father barbecued them outside on the grill. He put on an apron and, while they were sizzling, pranced around the yard, singing a song from an opera record he liked to listen to, and waving his spatula like a baton. He winked at Rhoda and tried to get her to dance with him, but she said, "Like I have time for this," and stalked back to the kitchen, letting the screen door slam behind her.

As we sat down to the table, Ricky reappeared. My father reminded him about the lawn. "Yeah, sure," Ricky said. "I was going to do it today. I was just waiting until later, when it's cooler."

My father popped open a beer. Rhoda finished her second gin and tonic.

Ricky ate like he slept: in enormous quantities. He loaded his plate with salad and bread. My father said, "Where do you think that boy puts it all? Do you think he has a hollow leg?" Rhoda pursed her lips and didn't say anything, but then he winked at me and I smiled back, like I thought he was funny.

Rhoda had put the two steaks on a platter. My father cut a piece off one of the steaks and put it on his plate. "Mm, just right," he said, smiling broadly. "My compliments to the chef." He laughed at his own little joke and passed the platter to Rhoda. She cut herself a piece, then passed the platter to Ricky. Ricky was busy shoveling salad into his mouth. Without even looking up, he pushed the entire second steak onto his plate and began to devour it. My father frowned. "Somebody must think we have a money tree in the backyard," he said. He turned to Ricky. "You've been outside, Ricky," he said pointedly, "Have you found a money tree?"

"What?" Ricky looked up, surprised, from his food.

"A money tree," my father said, more loudly this time. "I say, have you found one in our yard?"

Ricky shook his head "No." Secretly he looked at me, as if to say, what are they, crazy?

"What's that?" my father demanded.

"No." Ricky hesitated. "No, sir."

"Well, then," my father settled back in his chair. "If you find one, I would appreciate your letting me know."

The rest of the dinner passed in silence. Afterwards Ricky dissapeared again. Then I saw him, outside, in the dark. He was mowing the yard. With a clack of blades, as if in slow motion, the push mower moved a few feet forward, then a few feet back. Then it stopped. Ricky rested his

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elbows on the handle and gazed off in the darkness.

I went upstairs and lay on my bed. Eventually I heard my father come upstairs and the usual sounds as he got ready for bed: Rhoda's voice, his answering murmurs, water rushing through the pipes, the creak of the floorboards. After a while I heard Ricky come in and go to his room. Then all was still. I changed into my nightgown and went to the bathroom.

My father and Rhoda had their own bathroom. It had been remodeled and had two sinks, a modern shower, and a bath. Ricky and I shared the second bathroom, at the end of the hall. Our bathroom was long and narrow, not much wider than a closet, with a porcelain tub, like the one in Jeanie's yard: no showers here, like we were used to at home. At the far end of the room was a small window, propped open with a metal bar. Through it I could see Jeanie's house, almost close enough to touch, and could hear the radio playing, a slow song, accompanied by a woman's low, moaning voice. Something black fluttered near the roof, and for a second I thought, bats, but it was only the cat, scrabbling along the gutter.

I tried not to see myself in the mirror. When I did, I hated what I saw: the pinched, sallow face, the large lips, the dark eyes sunken under the wide forehead. At home my hair curled neatly at the base of my neck, but here, in the heat and humidity, it frizzed out from my head in untamed waves like a steel wool pad. I could hardly get a brush through it and I'd almost given up trying.

On my way back to my room I stopped by Ricky's door. "Ricky," I hissed into the darkness. "Are you awake?"

"Yeah."

He was lying on his bed with his arms crossed behind his head. I sat near his feet. For a minute I was still, listening to his slow and regular breathing, then I said, "Where do you think they are now?"

"Who?"

"Mom. And Ethan."

"I don't know."

"Maybe they're in Spain." I tried to remember the itinerary I'd seen on my mother's desk before we'd left, but I'd lost track of the days. "What day is it?"

"Friday."

"No, I mean, what day?"

"What difference does it make?" Ricky sighed, rolled over onto his side. "Get out of here. Go to bed."

I stood up. As I reached the door I heard his voice, muffled by the pillow. "Forty-two days," he said. "Forty-two more, and then we go home."

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Later, sometime in the night, I had to go to the bathroom. I was hot and sweaty; my nightgown clung to my legs. Drowsily I pushed my feet to the floor and shuffled down the hall. The door to the bathroom was open; a silvery light came in through the window. I heard a thin, whispering sound. The radio, I thought, sleepily. Still playing at Jeanie's house.

I was about to go in when I saw my father, standing at the toilet, peeing. The urine made a hushed, tinny sound as it fell in.

What was he doing there? He had his own bathroom; he never used ours.

Was I dreaming? Moments passed. They must have been only seconds, but they felt like hours. He stepped back, adjusted his pants. I told myself to leave before he saw me, but I was stuck there, frozen, watching him. Then his head turned. His eyes rested on me, dark and still, without reaction or expression, as if he didn't see me. As if I wasn't there. But how could he not see me? I was so close, only a few feet away. Slowly his hand reached out, gripped the lever, and flushed the toilet.

With a hiss and a whoosh, the water rushed into the bowl - and in that moment I was released. I ran back to my room, pulled up the sheet, and closed my eyes tight. Soon I heard my father's footsteps in the hall. For a brief second, he paused in front of my doorway. Then he was gone.

The next morning, I lay in bed, until long past the time my father and Rhoda left for work. Then I remembered it was Saturday and they would be home all day. Finally hunger drove me to the kitchen. They were sitting at the table, drinking coffee and reading the newspaper. No one said anything when I came in. As I poured myself a bowl of cereal, my father studied the weather page in the newspaper. "Light winds, no chop," he beamed at Rhoda. "Perfect."

My father and Rhoda often spent Saturdays on the lake with their sailboat. Sailing, my father said, was one of the things he had to offer us that our mother didn't. Ricky and I hated sailing. Ricky got seasick and I got in the way. Somehow, whenever I was around, a sail would end up trailing in the water or a thermos would sink to the bottom of the lake.

Rhoda said, "Don't look at me. I've got work to do." So my father decided to take Ricky and me sailing, alone. He would give us a sailing lesson. "I'll turn you into sailors, yet," he said to me with a smile.

Rhoda packed a canvas bag with bologna sandwiches, potato chips, kool-aid and beer. Soon Ricky and I were sitting in the car. As my father backed down the driveway, I looked over at Jeanie's house. Their newspaper had come undone and pieces of it were blowing across the yard.

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The boat sat at a mooring about one hundred yards from the dock. Usually my father rowed the dinghy out to it alone, quickly, with strong strokes. But that morning he did everything for our benefit, with exaggerated slowness. He pointed out the correct nautical terms and talked about currents and waves. He decided Ricky should learn how to row, so he left me on the dock while the two of them pushed off in the dinghy. I saw Ricky's skinny arms working as the oars dipped into the water, moved a few inches forward then stopped, as if the water were glue. On the next pass, the oars bounced across the top. The dinghy drifted closer to the dock. Speaking slowly and deliberately, my father instructed Ricky on what to do. Ricky applied himself to the oars; still the dinghy drifted aimlessly. An edge came into my father's voice. Then he was yelling and waving his arms around. The boat rocked from side to side. Ricky's face turned white and he dropped the oars. Finally my father picked them up and, while Ricky sat there, rowed to the mooring.

When the sailboat reached the dock, I handed over the canvas bag with our lunch, then climbed carefully in and settled myself in the cockpit. We motored out of the harbor. My father gave Ricky the tiller and went about setting out the lines: pulling some in, coiling others tight. As he worked, he talked, his voice loud and bright. He told us about the lines, which sail each one controlled, and how best to use it. I tried to look interested. The boat wove from one side of the channel to the other. "Just a little to the left," my father said, as we passed dangerously close to a buoy. "That's it. That's my boy."

After we cleared the harbor, my father cut the motor. The sailboat shuddered and seemed to come to a halt; then the wind caught the sail and drove us across the lake. My father held a beer out to us in a silent toast. "This is the life, isn't it, kids?"

I nodded and squirmed in my seat, which was made out of a nubby hard plastic that chafed my legs. Sweat trickled down my neck. The sun beat against the dark water and turned the mast into a dazzling silver blade. Busy at the tiller, Ricky seemed to have forgotten that sailing made him sick. Every now and then my father placed his hand gently over his and made a tiny correction.

The wind pushed steadily against the sails. Gradually the shoreline receded into a blue mist on the horizon. The lake was enormous, like a sea. A gull circled overhead and then, with a hesitation of wings, perched on the railing near me. He must have been exhausted; perhaps he had come from the other side of the lake. I reached my hand towards his silky and shiny feathers, but my father stood up, his arms waving. "Shoo!" he hollered. In a flurry of white and grey, the gull took off. "That's all I need," my father said as he sat back down, "bird poop." I

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watched the gull circle over the mast until he disappeared into the whiteness of the sun.

After a while my father took out the sandwiches. Ricky refused to relinquish the tiller. To my surprise – he had never been able to eat on the boat before – he wolfed down his sandwich and asked for another. The sun made me tired. I leaned back, rested my head on my arms, and slept.

Sometime later I heard a splash. I sat up and saw my father swimming naked alongside the boat. The wind had died down. Becalmed, the boat rocked gently back and forth. Ricky was resting his head on the deck, his eyes closed and his face pale. The rocking of the boat had finally made him sick.

My father whooped and hollered. His legs and arms, the curve of his back, flashed bluish-white against the dark water. He took a fistful of water and splashed me. "C'mon in!" he shouted. "It's great."

I looked over the side of the boat. The water looked black, endless and bottomless. My father swam with strong strokes around the boat, submerging and reappearing. Ricky didn't lift his head.

The sails hung empty; the boom slipped listlessly from side to side. My father tread water, and grinned. "C'mon toots!" he hollered. "Just jump in." He used both hands this time to splash me.

Water hit the side of my face. I reached up and brushed it away from my cheek, enjoying the coolness as it evaporated in the sun. Then I felt something different, a new coolness against my cheek. The wind.

The sail tightened. The boom slid to one side then was still, rigid and straining. I didn't feel as if we were moving, but my father was getting farther and farther away from the boat.

He began to swim, his arms plunging in and out of the water with strong strokes. But still we sailed away.

"A line!" my father hollered.

"Ricky," I whispered.

"Throw me a line!" my father screamed.

"Ricky !" I yelled.

Ricky looked up, his face white, his eyes glazed over.

Frantic, I scrambled along the deck for a line. Which one? There were so many. I remembered my father explaining them all, this one for the mast, this one for the jib. I grabbed a rope and tossed it out to him. For a second it hung in the air, a long, curling line, like a wisp of smoke. Then it hit the water and – because I had forgotten to secure it to the boat – dropped under the surface and disappeared.

Still the wind pushed against the sail, driving the boat forward. My father was swimming, swimming as hard as he could. But he couldn't reach us. Eventually, I knew, he would tire. He would tire, then he

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would drop, deep under the black water, and would be gone. Ricky and I would sail on, across the surface of this wide and empty lake. I knew I must do something to stop this from happening, but, like the night before, my limbs were heavy and limp. I could no more control them than I could the wind, which pushed steadily and relentlessly against the sails. Knowing this, I was no longer terrified. Instead I felt relieved. As if I'd been expecting this to happen for a long time, and was glad it was finally here.

As I sat there, frozen, Ricky came to his senses. He pushed the tiller all the way to one side and the boat, instead of driving forward, turned in slow and graceful circles. Finally my father caught up to us. Without a word, he sailed back to the harbor and put the boat away. Silently we drove home. As we pulled into the driveway, he cleared his throat. "We don't need to tell Rhoda about this," he said.

Sometime later, Jeanie and I were playing our water game again. The water ran down the driveway, creating little rivulets that washed away the dirt and gravel. The rivulets turned into canals; the dirt became wide deltas, cliffs and bluffs. We floated bits of leaves and bark down the canals like boats. On the tops of the cliffs we piled up pebbles and twigs, houses and towns. Across one of the streams I built up a bridge of sticks and mud. Without asking me, Jeanie moved the hose and washed it away. But I didn't say anything. Nor did I complain when she stepped on one of my houses, grinding it into the dirt with the heel of her shoe. I no longer pitied and feared Jeanie; instead I envied her. She had no father. Instead, she had a picture in a golden locket. Whenever she wanted, she could take it out and look at it, and the man in the picture would always be as she remembered him: young and handsome, wealthy and self-assured. Any day now, she could imagine, he would come home; he would reach out, and he would sweep her up in his arms.

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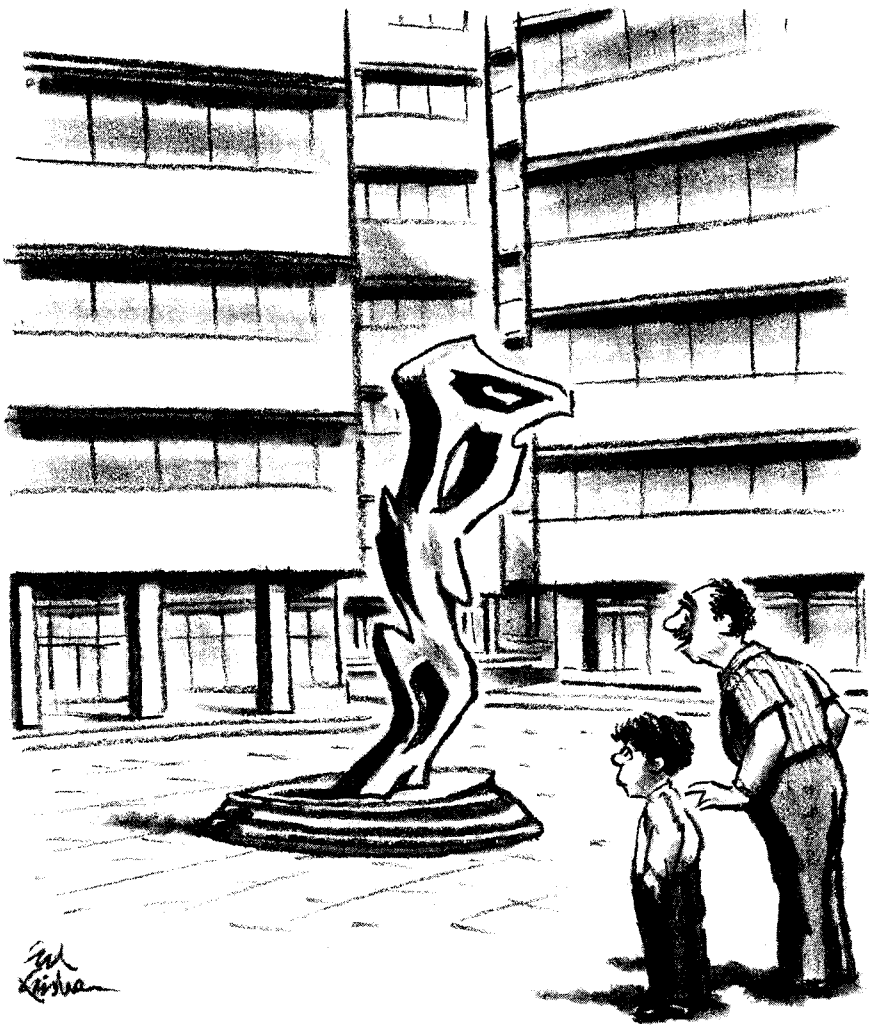

"Some day, with luck, all this will be a busy, wide-awake, wild, scary, real neighborhood again, Son."

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Poems

FERNANDO PESSOA (as Alvaro de Campos)

I got off the train . . .

And said goodbye to the man I'd met.
We'd been together for eighteen hours
And had a pleasant conversation,
Fellowship in the journey,
And I was sorry to get off, sorry to leave
This chance friend whose name I never learned.
I felt my eyes water with tears . . .
Every farewell is a death.
Yes, every farewell is a death.
In the train that we call life
We are all chance events in one another's lives,
And we all feel sorry when it's time to get off.

All that is human moves me, because I'm a man.
All that is human moves me not because I have an affinity
With human ideas or human doctrines
But because of my infinite fellowship with humanity itself.
The maid who hated to go,
Crying with nostalgia
For the house where she'd been mistreated . . .

All of this, inside my heart, is death and the world's sadness.
All of this lives, because it dies, inside my heart.

And my heart is a little larger than the entire universe.

July 4, 1934

Translator's Note: Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935) wrote under many different names but considered only three of his literary personalities, among them "Alvaro de Campos," to be full-fledged heteronyms.

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FERNANDO PESSOA (himself)

The gods are happy . . .

The gods are happy.
They live the calm life of roots.
Fate doesn't oppress their desires,
Or it oppresses but redeems
With immortal life.
The gods are not grieved
By shadows or other beings.
And, what's more, they don't exist.

July 10, 1920

Translated from the Portuguese by Richard Zenith

LINDA GREGERSON

Bad Blood

The question must have been the one
they all
ask, How do you feel? And because

these two, the son and the father, had
nothing
to say or, more precisely, everything and thus

no words, the camera only lingered for
the smallest
part of a minute and then they were gone.

Megan was drinking her apple juice and Emma
her milk.
The growths on the boy's pale face

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may not have been death's tracks at all –
they weren't
the common lesions – but every cell

is death now, those who love him must find
small res-
pite in "benign." "Benign" was more

or less what had been judged at law.
Hemo-
philiac, lover of blood. And blood

costs money, tainted blood
costs money
to recall. You can guess

what happens to market share once you let
the American
patents in, and screening tests,

homegrown ones, were simply a matter
of time.
In Paris it was already dark. And Justice

in its palace had retired for the night,
having found it com-
prehensible though dreadful of course

that ministers of health might have construed the national
interest
as requiring the transmission of incurable

disease. I think I said to Emma, when
she asked,
that something bad had happened in another

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country. Eloquent moral explication,
don't you think?
We dawdled over supper and the tele-

vision news, their father on his way back home,
our week's work
winding down. The pain was someone else's,

I've no claim to it. The pain
was someone else's. And the boy.

KARL KIRCHWEY

Leaf Season, Columbia County

Down such an avenue of red you came
three weeks ago today.
Here are the fifty different tints of he-
moglobin, carelessly

scattered across a muddy country road,
sufficient, through half-turn,
sacral glissando and pause, to have moved
the world on its foundation

that fraction which adjusts season and climate
toward the end of the year.
The sumac and the sugar maple light
your small face with their color;

the bending road forgets itself in blood.
O rainy rose-gold prince,
lead us to kindness through the unaltered
kingdoms of innocence.

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RAFAEL ALBERTI

To the Hand

To you, tremor & steadiness, guide
of the eyes' thread, mysterious line of sight
which flows thence to the brush's underside,
and sets to it a germinative light.

To you, flower in action, copula,
permanent accomplice of the pen,
tactful, slow, obedient, discreet
unless flung out – disjunctive only then.

To you, cross-canvas traveller, helpmate,
bearer of the stalk that generates
blossoming creatures, marvelous & ardent.

For the paintbrush, you are not an open rose:
you make your living happily half-closed.
To you, the tutelar god of Painting's garden.

Translated from the Spanish by Carolyn Tipton

AFFONSO ROMANO DE SANT'ANNA

The Building

(from "The Body-Object and Other Examples")

Body, house, building
they look like brothers
in height, shape, and fear
and in being solitary – objects.

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I see a construction
glittering enormous
and I tremble down to my
foundation and moral fibers.
There, that which corrupts men:
bed and table,
bread and woman,
love and the roof
that keeps us
– superimposed.
There, the laces and the pajama.

There
the debt and the model.

There
the clipper and the lock
of hair on the floor.

There
the naked body
as if it's a doctor's office.

The wool, the bullet, the irony,
the window, the cement, the betrayal,
the X-woman, the radius of the other
and the way to the top

and the way of falling
into yourself, into the earth
– and on top of your brothers.

There
– the construction
a crude invention
a cube of loneliness.

Translated from the Portuguese by Lloyd Schwartz with Rogério Zola Santiago

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PETER DAVISON

Under the Roof of Memory

(In Memory of Jane Davison)

1. Pleas

Please help us keep your memory alive.
When I leaf through what's left of you, stacked up
into a formless pile of crumbling paper,
my hand turns pages, and occasions blur
until I stoop for a mishandled pill
and cannot straighten up. Or yawn. Then
a whiff of the heat lightning of desire
flickers at the fragrance of a caress
forty years old, a darkened room in Kansas.
Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

2. Celebration

You floated weightlessly above your body,
in utterances aerating anything
that crept within your reach. You loved releasing
the preposterous, always managing to fold it
into a phrase, as when you located *Star Wars*
as taking place in "the Marseilles of the galaxy."
Dwindling through the waning days of life,
you wrote in your last letter, "Simplify,
simplify seems to be the method to deal
with the uncertainties of my health, as we
apply rational faculties to solve problems
we never really thought of as problems: who
carries the dirty laundry down to the machine
in the basement, and who carries it up."
Setting your house in order. Simplifying it
into a church as your body prepared to die.

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3. Remonstrance

Why can't you take your rest? You have been dead
so long that every cell of you has entered
my helplessly surviving body, leaching down
beneath the landscape to our children,
to the dear actuality of my second wife.
You could, like her first husband, live with us
as an invisible, cherished, and welcome presence.
You would be past sixty now. You would have stiffened,
whitened, would feel aches of your own,
and shuffle, smiling at your own decline
and other such absurdities: my own.

4. Critique

Is it worth much, this sedulous retelling
of the careworn beads of the body? Why must I
catalogue its youthful urges, its middle-aged
infelicities, its eldering need to finger
its entrances, dark witnesses to history?
Get shut of the obsessive self-regard
of the child, that temperature chart more passionate
in the terms of description than in the thing described!
What price forgetfulness? What price peace?

5. Envoi

Late in my life, I dream of us together,
clothed in the house whose peaked, protective roof
floats without burden over spacious rooms,
commodious, airy, bright as a church. Its walls
and roof, pulled out of touch by the intervention of time,
hold up a screen for love, a sleight of words.
We longed to keep a ravenous world at bay
by gazing down its glare and speaking well.

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MARTHA COLLINS

Times

The *Times* is right, he said at breakfast, time
is on our side. She hoped so; she'd hoped
it all in this good time, finding no place
in the gone-by out-of-mind. Though mornings still
this dark she wasn't sure: did she run against
it now, wind, sand in her face slapping
her down? Or was it, like some lover, running
out on her, not to be seized after all?
Remember the time, she started to say, but knew
he wouldn't, the times they'd shared no longer were
the same. Not that she'd keep time if she could,
not now, after that stunning fall. In no
time: was that what she wanted? Or full
time, one time, her own sweet time of life?

Races

The race is on the run, you said. It's not
what it used to be, I said, I mean the whole
question of it, not to mention answers.
Who's ahead, and how, of whom, and who
in the world is whom (sic) to who? It didn't
used to be this way: *race* is something we
made up, and anyway there's nine not three,
and changing all the time. I've only been in one
myself – 5K? And the human one, we're all
in that, but mostly it comes down to two,
and then it's face to face, then arm to arm.
An arms race? A race war? But races run
one way, on one course, to one finish –
even the time you run against is on your side.

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BRUCE SMITH

The Clearing

When the men on the wards have medicated themselves against self-
felony and sleep under their restraints, when the women
beaten by their men beat themselves into little slips
of things. When the LSD is licked from the envelopes

and the gun is smuggled – spring, trigger, and magazine –
into the ambivalent hands. One man said: *A gun with a bullet*
ought to separate the real Messiah from the imposters,
before he put it in his mouth. I thought of Faust,

skeptical in med school – no resurrection, no way out
of the body – before he became the soul's Rothschild.
One woman said: *I'll peel off my face with a razor*
in order to find the one under the one that won't kill

or be killed. Until then, Thorazine, lithium, and a dozen
purple hearts. When they were all under, when they were id
and superego, buzzed, unstrung humans, when they were cuffed
and chemically graced – Drugs are the jealous god –

I saw therapy was a sleeve
for their bleeding hearts,
their bleeding gums, their whacked and wounded
genitals, pressure sores, phantom wounds

dressed and drained. Out of their mouths, like a lit cigarette
the soul would burn and cloud. Their heads were unscented
flowers – all seed and sex. I'd sniff them, but
I'm professional, you know. It was then she came to me:

the tortured girl, my whipped shadow, my patient
impatient self. My initial diagnosis – an acute
someone suffering herself. Then the thousand iridescent
veils removed and rent. Her Viennese hands, her Florentine feet –

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this was the Europe I made of her as we sat
in hard chairs and breathed. I dreamt I was seized
like a nipple by a mouth. A man can dilate,
can't he? A man can receive.

This was our romance, making a third body
that was chaste and sexy. I'd forget myself then remember
the romantic sees the schizophrenic as suffering the truth,
the truth was the romance was killing me.

It can couple and blood. It can woo and work
its placebo effect. And I was afraid my desire was an open wound.
My mind was a membrane between her
and the turbulence. I sensed her tremors

and fugues, yet I was distant, as if in a book –
a love story by von Clausewitz.
I saw that love's not shudder and sentiment
anymore than the racket on the wards at night –

the call and response – is the rhythm and blues.
She said: *That's the rain, I could be the rain.*
It's a terrible thing for a girl to be the rain.
She became my Crazy Jane and I was the thing

to be torn, the way one might unravel
the double helix from the stem of our self.
I was a mess. An emotional petit mal,
my self-diagnosis. For five years I was in the furnace,

the wine press before we could dream an end.
I dreamt of wolves: a limb bit off, a cord chewed through.
I saw her vanish into the Rorschach of the world,
hues and saturations of her, those solids

and voids of the Actual with its *fade to black* and *jump*
cut. She sits in the room and becomes otherworldly
at dusk, it's like trying to touch perfume as she *fades*
to black. Jump cut: I'm in Vermont, sleepless

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before the night's open spaces. The moon's an orange, open
wound. Still and clear. I get good reception. Talk
Net, the news, two cuts from "Kind of Blue" – that threshold
between cool and new. I can't step out of the world without it.

It soothes me, this necromancy, in stereo,
blah, blah, easy listening and dread,
it doesn't matter. I love the vacant embrace, shadow,
ion, grace note. I can't be Faust without it.

Sometimes the autistic panic from the changing shapes
of clouds. They want eternity with bounds, they want it
now. Heaven's four beats to the bar and no cheating,
otherwise heaven's another name for the pit.

It was difference not divinity I wanted.
I wanted a lesser violence.
She wanted the body worshipped, it became clear
to me, for its halo of hair and its limp from the wrestle

with angels. Desire is a shitty little history,
our regret, our art. *Fade in:* A man sleeps
after the night long seance with the radio. He dreams
a penis is grafted to his ribs and he's bleeding.

He wakes to fields radiant with rain,
Bindweed, Bitterweed, Everlasting,
the edges of the meadow electrified for horses
and the long-lashed, moon-eyed, Brown Swiss.

Clipped timothy and sweet grass, a man
can receive. A man can be received. She wanted clear
distinctions between herself and the rain,
it became clear to me.

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LAURENCE LIEBERMAN

Sleuths

At the gate to The Inner Bar, a tap on my shoulder (more
a prod) – I spin about,
while Samson blurts: *you, Mafia man!. . .*
I stand accused,
veer left, can't get my tongue unstuck. *No, no way,*
I stammer. My reply
gets his goat, very pissed, I've robbed or cheated him:
Better you learn to use de English
language krecktly, America, Monsieur,
stomps away. Next man, coming up
the spiral stairs,

kindly eyes, tells me: *Samson is chief Don, hereabouts.*
Mafioso druglord
of de whole neighborhood. I should never
be out, solo,
on the streets past 9. *You hab de wrong skin color*
on your face. I charge
downstairs to The Inner Bar, an open courtyard between
three apartments. Rooms, facing the yard,
do double duty as front parlor and public
alehouse, wherein Farouk and rock-
star brother

Dagoo, beckoning, invite me to join them for down-home
snacks, who lustily slurp
spinachy callaloo soup, boiled
chicken & yams.
Tipped off by insiders, I'm a journalist for *Time,*
Newsweek, or some Bigtime
U. S. Papers, they offer me lunch, to be accompanied
by boombox hit tunes and the free scoop
on Grenada politics, all the War Sagas –
no thanks to eats, say I, but yes
to talespinning,

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for who can resist the stories? Farouk unveils lowdown
on the local druglord
wars: U. S. Marines, don't I know,
first introduced
hard drugs to Grenada: Yankee veteran dope pushers
set up the networks -
thriving business ever since. Kingpins kill one another
off, every few months, in battle
for the best turfs. And when they get itchy
jousting for power, *we lay low*
hoping to stay

out of crossfires. Jus' dis week, duh heat's on. So tings
be comin' to a boil!
Doors fly open. I stop writing,
fold my notepad.
Ex-minister of Finance Gascoyne fumes alcohol
and spitfire cusswords,
bull-ruttish in fury, for I'd spurned his thick-tongued
slurpy rambles, hours back. No mercy.
No forgiving my insult. He points a shaky
finger down at me, seated there:
it is I, none

other, who be the accursed nemesis he'd warned them about.
Better hold your tongues,
says he, crab-pincering his thumb
and forefinger
tongs at each would-be informer mouth, much as if
he'd twist and yank out
any moist member leaking State Secrets to one such as me:
a dangerous spy, he'd have them know,
I'll sell their stories for big bucks (no fee,
no concessions for them) to smut
mags of Hollywood.

Or worse, I may stick them in my own books; he's read them
all, packs of lies, no truth
in any page. . . A new tack, I work
for police spy
enclave, so I'll bring CIA lawmen down on their necks. . . .
No one pays him mind,

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but it's a challenge to hear each other over his ravings.
My notepad back in action now, info
moving fast between us, while Right Honorable
Gascoyne's switched from Security
Guard to sleuth mode,

he stands close to my neck, peeps over my shoulder & scans
the jottings with blasé
I-told-you-so smirks. Soon he mumbles
under his breath
few words he can make out, as if defusing the charge
of my wild script and scrawl
by working the tart gumballs of syllables round and round
in his pouchy cheeks; he spits, from time
to time, expunging plugs of foul noun-and-verb
tobacco. So I withdraw my little
journal pad, snap

it shut. *Ah, YOU are the spy,* I say. *Indeed not,* says he. *I am INTELLIGENCE.* Silence . . .
Two barmen, wheeling their portable
jiffy hooch carts
about the courtyard, traipse into our soup kitchen
armed with raggedy dogeared
yellow manuscripts. Both have *major exposés* in progress,
says one – *his* only drawback, he lacks
the finesse and niceties of my Highbrow
Education; chirps the other,
his book's all set

to go to Press, but he'll be needing my few moments *assist*
with grammar and sentence
hookups . . . And as I edge backwards
through the gate, Ex-
Minister Gascoyne scolds, whenever I do publish
my most *dastardly writings*
about their lives, I had better refrain from terming
their fair parlorscape a *Ghetto* –
my exit sealed by the razor of his knuckly
long finger drawn, lickety-slash,
across his throat.

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SELWYN PRITCHARD

Bloody Metaphors

Spoiled sacrifices:
ranked generations grinning
in the dim arcade.

Deadweight dads, tough lads
("Gallipoli." "Singapore.")
part of Empire Trade.

Thistle, thrush, lark: Home
transplanted but *still* elsewhere.
Beyond death? Sepia smiles.

They made a garden
of Eden: paddocks, Maoris squared,
killing chains taut.

Tribute's yet paid in
commonplace atrocities –
lambs jolt by like Jews.

Bloody Metaphors!
"Take eat," grunts Te Ruapraha
at Tenderkist Meats.

Above gum-pocked streets
the moon melts like certainty
in the morning sky.

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BOOKS

Out of the Past

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS. By Manés Sperber. Vol. I, God's Water Carriers. $25.95. Vol. II, The Unheeded Warning. $24.50. Vol. III, Until My Eyes Are Closed with Shards. Holmes & Meier Publishers. $34.95.

Manès Sperber died in 1984. Had he lived another five years he would have known that history finally vindicated him: along with no more than a few dozen intellectuals around the world, among them his friends André Malraux, Arthur Koestler, and Raymond Aron, he courageously stood up against dictatorships, including the Soviet version, and against the riptide of insidious propaganda that swayed worldwide opinion and mercilessly assailed its critics in the name of progress. Sperber, whose friends called him Munju, always stayed away from the customary dichotomization of issues, and was able to live with the discriminations most people find hard to accommodate: to fight Fascism without being blinded by Communist cant; to recognize the need to guide a vanquished Germany without turning the victors into governing conquerors; and to advocate peace while recognizing the inordinate dangers of a peace movement that ignores the pitfalls of disarmament when facing an armed camp.

In this three-volume autobiography, which he wrote in his seventies, Sperber explains that his experiences taught him "to put everything in question, especially any certainty cited by those who promise unbounded freedom and future happiness even as they propagate renunciation, subjugation, murder, and death."

Long before then, he had fictionalized many of the personalities and unforgettable episodes he had known. In his memoir he frequently explains where and why he had "used" them in his novels. Those who have died or come out of hiding he now calls by their real names. But he continues to use pseudonyms if he thinks they may still want to remain anonymous.

All Our Yesterdays is the autobiography of a psychologist and a novelist: it incorporates the insights of the former and uses the techniques of the latter, not consciously or directly, but naturally. The first volume, *God's Water Carriers,* covers Sperber's life until 1918 to the end of World War I. The water carriers were the poorest inhabitants of the *shtetl,* unskilled workers who had to perform heavy labor from dawn until late into the night. Sperber recounts his earliest recollections while

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living in the tiny, impoverished village of Zablotov, in Poland, where he was born in 1905, and among whose inhabitants, who "lived on air," Sperber's family was relatively well off. There, everyone was observant. Children were at most four years old when they began learning to read and translate the Bible and to believe in the imminent arrival of the Messiah. Sperber keeps coming back to incidents in these formative years, reassessing them in the light of later ones, evoking feelings of love for his father and of revulsion at childish digressions, encounters with Polish neighbors and Ruthenian helpers. One might conclude that these are the habits of the psychologist, but even more they are those of an intellectual who insists on getting things right, who ever more profoundly explores the deepest crevices of human existence – the nuanced forces that prompt individuals to comprehend themselves and the world in all their complexities.

With the outbreak of World War I, "the mood in the *shtetl* was virtually manic-depressive; optimism rapidly alternated with fear of a Russian invasion, of pogroms, famine, and epidemics." A year and a half later, after a sojourn in Tracz, and attempted returns to the *shtetl,* the family moved to Vienna – the center of Kaiser Franz Josef's empire. For *shtetl* Jews throughout the monarchy, Franz Josef was perceived as the guarantor of civil rights, the protector against pogroms. Early on, Sperber had faced discrimination against Jews (and worse), and the repercussions and indignities he suffered for being marginal and defenseless. And he had resolved that he wouldn't "forget such incidents until [his] eyes [were] closed with shards." His life is testimony that he never did.

In Vienna, the family was plunged into abject poverty, having to live with bedbugs and insufficient heat, with humiliations and degradations. Sperber recalls the shooting of Count Stürgkh for his role in the still ongoing war; his sympathy for the assassin, Friedrich Adler; his having been less sad at Franz Joseph's death than his elders were; his visits to movies and the theater; some of the many books he began to bring home from the library; and the trial and condemnation of Friedrich Adler and his pardon by the last Hapsburg emperor, Karl the First. At the end of this volume, he recollects humiliations at the *Gymnasium,* wearing ill-fitting hand-me-downs, his involvement in Hashomer Hatzair and Zionism, his ever-growing awareness of politics, and his increasing sympathy for the Russian revolution.

Between 1918 and 1933, in *The Unheeded Warning,* Sperber came of age. That was when he met his first revolutionary and became an activist Socialist and, in 1927, a member of the Communist Party. Subsequent emigrations as well – with their own brands of anti-Semitism, the need to learn new languages, and with living from hand to mouth – only

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sharpened his sense of memory. Throughout, he never takes on the plaints of a victim. On the contrary, he recounts the events of the century from the standpoint of an active, participant observer – a person of the left, who has lived in the maelstrom of the dangerous times he experienced and who forever is drawing lessons from them, if only to better understand the future. Sperber pulls no punches, and some of his observations may be called prescient. For instance:

> The downfall of the Hapsburg monarchy set the peoples of the old empire free. The nationalities transformed themselves into nations, each seeking to use any means, especially military ones, to safeguard its new state without delay. People like me regarded this "awakening of the nations" as revolutionary progress, a triumph of national freedom which – so we believed – would in short order be followed by revolutionary liberation from poverty and class rule. However, it soon turned out that this hope was quite deceptive.

At the time, Sperber was still an ardent and activist Communist. At the age of sixteen, he had already given a talk, "The Psychology of the Revolutionary," for which Alfred Adler sat in the audience. Adler, who himself was engaged in fusing radicalism with psychoanalysis in an effort to liberate the masses and help institute a Social Democratic government by means of education, immediately asked Sperber to join his circle. Sperber did so for six years, always focusing on the socioeconomic causes of psychic disorders, whether working with individuals or in youth and welfare organizations. After a falling-out with Adler – over one of Sperber's cases – Sperber moved to Berlin in 1927, where he practiced his own psychology, which focused on "the psycho-logic of power, both the power striven for and the power exerted by a regime of terror"

Six years after Sperber joined the Communist Party, the Nazis came to power. After the Reichstag fire, on February 27, 1933 (it is still not clear who set it), Hitler came to power. Now, in double jeopardy - as a Communist and as a Jew – Sperber no longer spent nights at home. He listened to the radio and argued with friends about tactics for the future – until the Gestapo arrested him. He was placed in solitary confinement and tortured. His release was instigated by his parents and diplomatic friends, and he managed to leave for Vienna. Yet he was not content to have been rescued. He stayed in Vienna for only a short time, even more set on helping to change history, initially by doing Party work in Yugoslavia.

Later on – for his safety as well as for the cause – Sperber was sent

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to Paris to be the "ideological" leader of the Institute for the Study of Fascism (INFA), founded by German emigrants at the behest of the Comintern. There, among many others whom he admired, he met Gide, Koestler, Münzenberg, Gallimard, as well as Malraux (who had just won the Prix de Goncourt). Sperber became friendly with most of the Party operatives he met, and thus found it difficult to even mention his early doubts about the true nature of Stalinism. He championed the cause of the Party even after his initial forebodings when he heard of the murder of Kirov, Stalin's comrade-in-arms, by counter-revolutionaries inside Leningrad's Party headquarters. He defected after the next set of show trials, unable to fool himself any longer about the treachery of Stalin and the tactics of the Comintern.

During his ten years in the CP, Sperber met and worked with all of its important international operatives, with the functionaries and writers, the fellow travelers and influential sympathizers. Hitler's victory in Germany served only to convince him (and others) that Communism was the only means to combat Fascism. Even while waiting for the German proletariat – and the Austrian Socialists – to revolt, Sperber recognized that "no one calling himself a Communist could deviate by even a hair's breadth from the line determined by Moscow and [which] might completely change and, even reverse overnight." He had been on the spot and on the inside track of every portentous event: the fire of the Vienna Justitzpalast in 1927, the murder of the Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dolfuss in 1934, the Nazis' killing of Hitler's erstwhile henchman, Captain Röhm, in 1933. On every one of these occasions, Sperber had been revolted by the disrespect for human lives and by the terror resulting from police and anarchic brutality. Still, it would be misleading to consider this trilogy no more than a political memoir, for Sperber examines and reexamines his personal feelings toward wives and sons, provides sharp-eyed descriptions of men and women he met (with some of whom he had intimate relations,) and interweaves these personal events with historical occurrences.

Sperber often refers to the fate of emigrants, their struggles to receive work permits and jobs, and to become licensed in their professions. Germans and German Jews were the most unpopular foreigners in Paris, especially those who could not offer a few packs of cigarettes to the appropriate officials. But after the outbreak of the war, everything got even worse. Sperber depicts the many insuperable dangers, the narrow escapes, the cunning required to elude the Nazis, and the death camps after the fall of France. When he describes his inordinate luck in again meeting up with his wife, Jenka, and their precarious existence in Cagnes-sur-Mer, he is supremely restrained: anyone aware of the dangers of their separate escapes to Switzerland will recognize that the novelist's control

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of his material is at work here.

After the war Sperber chose Paris as his home, though as he puts it, an emigrant is forever without a homeland and yet can feel at home in many places. He had loved Paris ever since he first went there in 1929 for "its unmistakable rhythm of a world-class city," even though he continued to maintain an intimate – but decidedly distant – relationship with Vienna and Berlin.

Throughout all of his writing, Sperber illustrates the exorbitant conflicts of the writers and intellectuals who were his contemporaries, most of whom, in one way or another, first were drawn and then became dedicated to the Communists' promises. Sooner or later they had to abandon their ideals – along with their close friends, their way of life, and often the core of their being. It seems to me that European intellectuals who were living through these times more closely – that is, who did not have the luxury of theorizing while being separated by an ocean – could not fool themselves as much as many of our own did. But many who remained faithful to the cause, notes Sperber, such as Bertold Brecht and Lion Feuchtwanger, took refuge from the war in the far-away and much maligned capitalist United States rather than in the Soviet Union.

When I met Sperber in Paris, in the late 1970s, I first was conscious of being sized up by his piercing glance. He was friendly and helpful, and he was totally honest, sharp and clever. On and off, he kept marveling at the ability of intelligent people to hold on to the Communist ideals in spite of the incontrovertible evidence of Russian imperialism and the Gulag. He was particularly upset that in France, Jean-Paul Sartre had so effectively linked Marxism to the national faith – to equality, fraternity and liberty – and that his philosophy had been so influential. Sperber did not fail to criticize some aspects of capitalism. But he maintained that despite its faults capitalism ultimately respects human values. Once he told me that in spite of all that went wrong in our century, of the exterminations in Hitler's and Stalin's camps, humanity had progressed, because at least no one any longer had to perform physical labor from morning through night. Only after reading this memoir did I understand that he was recalling the inhuman conditions of the water-carriers in distant Zablotov.

He often told of more recent events, of his experiences after the war when he joined Malraux as chargé de mission in de Gaulle's cultural ministry, his work as an editor at the publishing house Calmann-Lévi, and as an official of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Then and later, Sperber neither set aside his convictions nor stopped speaking up. Shortly before his death, in his acceptance speech upon receiving the prestigious Peace Prize from the German Book Trade Association, he took a strong

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stand against the European peace movement. He declared that

> no matter how the relations between America and Russia may develop, Europe will only be able to keep out of their conflicts not through masochistic defenselessness but by becoming a super power in its own right, just as horrifying as those giant states. This is immensely sad. Nevertheless it is unavoidable because this world will continue to be confronted by the danger and temptation of suicide for generations to come. So we old Europeans, who abhor war, we must unfortunately become dangerous ourselves in order to guarantee peace.

Sperber's many bitter experiences, his participation as a high-ranking member of the Communist Party, as a Jew who had been committed to Zionism, as a psychologist and ardent anti-Fascist, and as a member of the Resistance, convinced him that, ultimately, there are no easy solutions. Appeasement of ruthless dictators always had led to disaster: in this case, in order to win the peace one had to be prepared for war.

Sperber's trilogy is now available in English, in this excellent translation from the German by Joachim Neugroschel and Harry Zohn. The recollections of a writer who was acquainted with the ins and outs of the international Communist network ought to be read by everyone concerned with the history of our century – if only as antidote to the many revisionist histories that currently are being produced. French, German and Austrian thinkers have admired Sperber for years. They have read his novels and political commentaries, and have honored him. It is time that we too pay attention to one of the central commentators on our times – as a vaccine against whatever ideologies may be coming down the tubes. And for the pleasure of reading.

EDITH KURZWEIL

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Campus Correctness

KINDLY INQUISITORS: THE NEW ATTACKS ON FREE THOUGHT. By Jonathan Rauch. University of Chicago Press. $17.95.

This is a thoughtful and refreshing book – and a surprising one. Its title suggests that it will be another of those "ain't it awful?" books about speech codes on campus, but – though it contains an adequate variety of adequately horrific anecdotes in that vein – it is much more than that. Its central argument is not, as one might expect, focused on the First Amendment, nor is it exclusively political; it is primarily epistemological. One might best describe the book as an extended reflection on the observation from Charles Sanders Peirce with which it opens: "that upon this first . . . rule of reason, that in order to learn, you must desire to learn, and in so desiring not be satisfied with what you already incline to think, there follows one corollary, which . . . deserves to be written upon every wall of the city of philosophy: Do not block the way of inquiry."

Like Peirce, Rauch looks at science (by which, like Peirce, he means inquiry, generally, not just inquiry in the sciences) as a social enterprise, in the sense that it involves a community of inquirers, sometimes cooperating, sometimes competing with each other, both within and across generations. Like Popper and Polanyi, Rauch stresses the importance of understanding that genuine inquiry can flourish only in an environment of free thought and critical discussion. The "new attacks on free thought" to which his subtitle refers are, therefore, threats of a more than purely political character; they are threats, above all, to the integrity of inquiry.

Central to Rauch's reflections is his conception of "liberal science," which he characterizes as a system for settling which beliefs get to count as knowledge by a kind of free competition in the market of ideas. An idea has a legitimate claim to objective truth only if it has withstood checking; such claims are always provisional; and the checking depends on no one's personal authority; it could in principle be done by anyone with the same result.

The first main theme of the book is that this system, summed up in "the liberal principle" – "checking of each by each through public criticism" – is the only acceptable way to settle disputes about what is the case. "The only acceptable way" both epistemologically and morally; for, Rauch argues, if disputes are not settled by unfettered criticism, they will be settled in "creed wars," by violence instead of evidence and argument. The second main theme of the book is that the liberal principle is presently losing ground to "the fundamentalist principle" - "those who know the truth should decide who is right" – to "the egalitarian

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principle" – "all sincere persons' beliefs have equal claims to respect" – and most alarmingly, to "the humanitarian principle" – "all sincere persons' beliefs have a claim to respect, with the first priority being that no one be hurt." The fundamentalist, whether Islamic or Christian or Marxist or whatever, would block the way of inquiry by making "wrong thinking" a sin or a crime; the egalitarian and the humanitarian, whether multiculturalist or Afrocentrist or feminist or whatever, would block the way of inquiry by banning ideas which cause offense.

An academic epistemologist or philosopher of science might be uneasy with Rauch's description of liberal science as a "game"; might feel that questions about expertise and authority in the sciences have been a bit skimped; and might complain that Rauch has not resolved the difficult technical issues about falsification and confirmation which lurk behind his notion of "checking," nor tackled the hard questions about realism and objectivity which lurk behind his thesis that liberal science is the best system of deciding what is really knowledge and what only opinion. Such complaints, though valid enough, would be unfair. For Rauch has succeeded remarkably well at what he set out to do.

He is illuminating: he pulls together what might seem like very different phenomena – Ayatollah Khomeini's sentence of death on Salman Rushdie, advocacy of equal time for "creation science," laws or speech codes to punish or silence Holocaust revisionists or sexists or racists or homophobes – and makes one see how they are alike and how alike are the ways in which they threaten inquiry. (And sometimes, as when he compares Khomeini's Iran to Plato's *Republic,* he illuminates the philosophical past as well as the political present.) He is shrewd: explaining his use of the term "fundamentalism," he identifies with striking accuracy the kind of intellectual style that stands in the way of genuine inquiry, "the strong disinclination to take seriously the notion that you might be wrong." He is honest: he acknowledges the sincerity of the fundamentalists and the good intentions of the humanitarians (hence, "kindly inquisitors"); he does not deny that freedom of inquiry carries a price, but argues that it is worth the price it carries.

And he is admirably tough-minded, as well as admirably pithy: "except insofar as an opinion earns its stripes . . . it is entitled to no respect whatever"; "although allowing mistakes is risky, suppressing them is much riskier"; "a no-offense society is a no-knowledge society"; "as soon as people learn they can get something if they raise Cain about being offended, they go into the business of professional offendedness"; "knowing a man's color or descent tells you nothing whatever about his 'perspective' . . . To insist on including people of various races as representatives of their 'racial perspective' is to flirt with the irrationalism of

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Nazi science"; misinformation about homosexuality's being a 'disease,' or blacks' being inferior or whatever, does hurt people. But all misinformation hurts people . . . and unfettered criticism is the cure, not the disease."

Both at the beginning of the book and at the end Rauch wonders aloud whether he is being too alarmist. I think not; in fact, I am not sure he is quite alarmist enough. He does not mention, but I should, the dismal jargon that has begun to be heard on the radical wing of academic epistemology – "hegemonic discourse," "exclusionary meta-narrative," "the privilege of disadvantage" – signals that the task is well underway of articulating a theoretical "justification" of the idea that genuine, critical inquiry is impossible or undesirable. Thanks to Rauch's simple but useful categories, one can hear, in this jangle of jargon, the fundamentalist theme – "women (or blacks, or 'oppressed people' generally) are epistemologically privileged"; the egalitarian theme – "we need a democratic epistemology"; the humanitarian theme – "the Enlightenment meta-narative is exclusionary, offensive to those it marginalizes."

Rauch himself jokes good-naturedly about epistemology's public image ("if you want to clear the room at a cocktail party, say 'epistemology'"), and describes epistemological theorists as "cobweb-beclothed." This book is a welcome breath of fresh air; let us hope that it will not only blow away some of those old cobwebs, but also, by alerting us to the real-world consequences of the most abstract-seeming epistemological theories, provoke more strenuous efforts to ensure that the new rhetoric against inquiry gets (to use one of Rauch's favorite words) decisively "debunked."

SUSAN HAACK

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Thought and Feeling

TESSERAE AND OTHER POEMS. By John Hollander. Alfred A. Knopf. 20.00.
SELECTED POETRY. By John Hollander. Alfred A. Knopf. $27.50

In these two volumes John Hollander looks before and after, presenting in *Selected Poetry* his considered sense of his career and suggesting in *Tesserae* some of the new turns his poetic interests are taking. Together the two volumes form an intense meditation on the power and capacities of poetry as an act of thought and as an inquiry into the ends and significance of feeling.

> My pulse at midnight – something as if said,
> As if to have the heart put to the head
> The question no one, without lying, can
> Answer affirmatively: *Are you dead?*

Nobody could have written this stanza from the title poem of *Tesserae* but John Hollander, and the delicate sadness one hears under its restless wit, not belying the wit so much as sharpening it, is one of Hollander's characteristic notes. One may take the remark that no one can answer the question "Are you dead?" with a "yes" as a kind of philosopher's jest. The finicky coolness of "Answer affirmatively," in particular, treats its subject with a self-conscious intellectual distance one can imagine some readers becoming impatient with: this scene of anxious wakefulness seemed to have been set for something other than an academic conundrum. But isn't this clinging to an academic phrase part of the pathos of the poem – the edgy defensiveness which marks out this scene as something other than yet one more commonplace nocturnal *memento mori*? Hollander *would* come at it this way, just as Shakespeare's clown would with a joke ("Exit Burbage"). And beneath the philosopher's jest is the realization that this scene represents in dramatic form the real meaning of a central moment of philosophy, the Cartesian *cogito, ergo sum:* as long as I am in fear of death I must not be dead. When I think this thought, the poet seems to say, I hold death before me, and I hold it at bay, aware at once of its power over me, and the power I momentarily hold over it.

Each *tessera,* a *Rubaiyat* stanza whose four lines (*tessera,* like *ruba'i,* derives from a word meaning "four") answer the four corners of those ivory tiles the Romans used as a tally or as identification, can stand alone, but each, also like tiles, can be seen in patterns with others. The

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tesserae that most stay with me reach past the attempt to maintain control either with wit or with the strong closure that indicates a mastered perception, even a perception of loss, and arrive at a melancholy acceptance which is not quite surrender:

> Being no longer made of flax or cotton,
> Pages we've written on will soon be rotten,
> Just as our gesturing hands will wear away,
> Just as our tones of voice will be forgotten.

This calm sadness, subsiding into wisdom, strikes me as Hollander's undersong. It is not merely a reflection of his sense of general cultural decline, nor even of his sense of personal mortality, so much as it is an awareness of the tears of things, an anxious awkward tenderness about life, a wounded hopefulness which the poet is supposed to know better than to entertain but which somehow survives everything he knows.

Lest I paint too dark a picture of this book, I point out that it is brightened by many examples of Hollander's light-handed intellectual satire. The sonnet "Making Nothing Happen," for instance, turns Auden's line about poetry into the occasion of a Gnostic myth, in which Nothing becomes the name of a dark Something which takes the place of the chaotic "universal blanc-/Mange:"

> She said, *Let there be night* and there was night
> Intensest night, within which Nothing might
> Be seen emerging from its ruined tomb.

"Early Inscription" mischievously collates imaginary commentaries on the phrase EIDLLA EW [DNA?] NROBLLA ERAEW (Niemand's translation: we are all born and we all die), tracing hilarious controversies from the early disputes of Nimmerwahr and Schwarzweiss through many of the current critical fashions (One of the commentators claims, "It is a slippery slope from boasting of the ultimate human knowledge to asserting, vilely, mankind's hegemony over the 'garden of creation.'")

A *Selected Poetry* is an author's autobiography, his attempt to sort out what seems to have mattered over the years and to connect his several ventures into one coherent story. When a poet makes such a volume he must, like the anthologist, expect to be taken to task for his "shocking omissions." It is curious what Hollander does leave out: all of the poems from *Types of Shape,* all of the verse from *In Time and Place,* and everything from *Reflections on Espionage. Powers of Thirteen,* to my mind not only Hollander's most inventive volume but also his deepest,

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appears here in its entirety, as does all of his major sequence "Spectral Emanations."

How few of the steps recorded in this book turn out to be false ones, how little time, over the decades, has John Hollander spent trying on the current style or retuning his poetic voice. Most of Hollander's characteristic concerns and virtues – his interest in Wittgenstein and in the power and limits of poetic language, his erudition that second thoughts show to be more than playful, his prodigious technical skill, his interest in *ekphrasis* as a branch of ethical and metaphysical investigation – all of these show amply even in *A Crackling of Thorns,* which Auden picked as the Yale Younger Poets volume for 1958. Some poems in that volume, such as "The Great Bear" or "The Lady's Maid's Song," would not have seemed out of place even in *Tesserae*. It is striking not only how strongly Hollander's career is unified by his exploration of the many branches of one big problem (what is the relationship between particular poetic forms and the characteristic truths they are able to disclose), but also how often the arguments critics make about poetry are already issues argued out in the poetry itself.

Consider for instance the oft-repeated exclamation: "But all this is just poetry about poetry! I wanted to hear poetry about life!" Tempting as it is to respond to this with an argument *ad hominem,* Hollander's own response (in *Powers of Thirteen*) is delicate, ruefully comic, and more candid even than the answer Sidney makes to the same charge in *Astrophel and Stella:*

> When, aping the literary lover, his eye filled
> With one star, I at eighteen tried rhyming into bed
> A tall, dark girl named Barbara, now dead, everyone
> Had an earful of my earnest conceits, studious
> Wit, and half-concealments of the way I'd hoped we'd end
> Up; and the more contrived my rhyming became, the more
> It meant about desire (this the ear-filled ones could not
> Understand). I marvelled, dazed, at what was done by less
> Textual souls for fun; I hoped to, like the girl-shy Yeats,
> Pass through the tenderest of gates, and discharge with
> A mighty spasm in her deep, romantic chasm.
> The truth was that, though she and I rhymed a few times my
> Young words on their paper sheet had far more joy than we.

Impatience with poetry about poetry is a form of impatience with poetry *qua* poetry: "Cut out the fancy stuff and speak the truth" is a way of putting certain kinds of truth out of reach, analogous to the vainglo-

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rious pseudo-candor that knows that love is just sex (and sex is just biology) or that truth is just power (and power is just economics). One of the reasons one writes in verse at all is that the discipline of form forces one closer to the living motions of one's thought, yielding perceptions one might not otherwise have stumbled upon – it isn't that the sonnets impose upon us sonnet thoughts; it's that finding our own way of solving a sonnet problem gives us a better sense of what is our own about that way, makes us think through our thoughts with a keener intelligence. Form, as Stephen Cushman remarks, is trope. A thought plainly blurted out is less of a thought.

Hollander's concerns are intensely particular, which is why his poetry is full of object lessons about form, about metrics, about enjambment, about how to retain an easy and conversational tone – the tone of someone thinking aloud (as J.D. McClathy puts it) – even when solving a technical problem of mad arbitrariness. This concern with specific verse-problems is partly a consequence of skepticism about grand theory in poetry – which Hollander gently parodies in his mock-high-romantic "Mount Blank." Hollander marks out the boundaries of poetry empirically, each poem a kind of formal test, rather than through the development of a fully rigorous theory of poetry, as Stevens attempts. He has Wittgenstein's faithfulness to the details, not Kant's sweep.

This particularity (and perhaps an embarrassment about things that need saying in a loud voice) makes Hollander appear to be a poet of fancy more than a poet of imagination, but the kind of power one calls imaginative often marks Hollander's poetry in ways that more direct means would falsify. Hear it in this meditation on being an American poet, a belated heir to a tradition which made him but which he cannot quite make his own and also cannot fully renew, from "One of Our Walks," in *Powers of Thirteen:*

> We ramble along up-hill through the woods, following
> No path but knowing our directions generally,
> And letting fall what may we come up against the worn
> Fact that all this green is second growth – reaches of wall
> Knee-high keep appearing among low moments of leaf;
> Clearings, lit aslant, are strewn across old foundations.
> This is of course New England now and even the brook,
> Whose amplified whisper off on the right is as firm
> A guide as any assured blue line on a roadmap,
> Can never run clear of certain stones, those older forms
> Of ascription of meaning to its murmuring, as
> We hear it hum, *O, I may come and I may go, but. . .*
> Half-ruined in the white noise of its splashing water.

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As imagination slips into Hollander's poetry, disguised as fancy, so, in a strange inversion of the usual practice, other persons speak through Hollander's poetry, disguised as himself. The ability to acknowledge the living presence of other minds, to step outside of one's own needs and plans, at least so far as to conceive of others as ends rather than means, is the central moral challenge of art, which so often imagines persons in strictly conventional or strategic ways. Spenser parodied how the sonneteers devoted themselves to a beloved who was merely a projection of their own wishes and needs by documenting the mischief caused by an artificial woman, false Florimell, whose lips really are rose-petals, whose hair really is made of gold-wires, and so on. The "You" whom Hollander so frequently addresses (and who is the poet's interlocutor throughout *Powers of Thirteen*) is quite frankly his own imagination. But, strangely, the easy back-and-forth, the intimacy and continual change of the game between I and You, grants "You" a kind of reality that seems far removed from vulgar wish-fulfillment.

> Let's call it quits: I never long for you any more.
> But the matter of your voice low in the late lamplight
> My heart minded over for so long, the substance of
> Your morning shadow dancing on the floor as you dressed,
> The evening shadow of your body's depth, stand here
> Demanding some ceremony now. Some fuss. Let's call
> It quits. Addressing what I've just said, you reply then
> Cheerily, "Hi, Quits!" We giggle and have done for now
> With lying, not against half-truths so much, but telling
> Tales against the other – falsehood – halves of whatever
> We really mean by saying what we feel. " Hi, Quits" *"Quits"*
> (Like all his clan of feelings) grumbles, not at the joke,
> But rather at having been given a name at all.
> ("The Resolution," from *Powers of Thirteen*)

Now perhaps sometimes Hollander has simply reversed the sonneteer's procedure, addressing a person in disguise as a fantasy rather than a fantasy in disguise as a person. But mostly what I think he has done is to burst through the false distinction between projection and acknowledgment, not by showing in the stale poststructuralist way that acknowledgment is really only rhetorical, only an elaborate self-deceit about what is finally only projection (or a creation of the "male gaze"), but by showing that the unpredictability, the variegation of relatedness and distance, the intense vitality which is characteristic of imagination at its best teaches us how to love others in their own endlessly changing forms of

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relatedness and separateness. That we love others to the extent that they resemble the projections of our imagination need not trouble us if our imaginations are worth anything, since respect for the imagination and respect for the beloved illuminate each other and work in identical ways, neither quite reduced to the other. This is one of the things that Stevens may have meant when his "more harassing master" told him that the theory of poetry is the theory of life. Certainly the endless imaginative restlessness of Hollander's poetry is not only about love but of it.

JOHN BURT

A *Yellow Pages* of Theory and Criticism

THE JOHNS HOPKINS GUIDE TO LITERARY THEORY AND CRITICISM. Edited by Michael Groden and Martin Kreiswirth. Johns Hopkins University Press. $65.00.

In this era of budgetary belt-tightening and university press downsizing, *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism* is a surprisingly ambitious undertaking. Many years in the planning and execution, drawing on the financial support of two major institutions (the Johns Hopkins Press and the Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism at the University of Western Ontario), the advice of scores of academics, and the writing of two hundred and one scholars, it aspires to be nothing less than an overview of all of literary criticism in all cultures and times (with understandable emphasis on the developments of the present century). The result is a massive, double-columned Yellow Pages of lit crit. If it falls alphabetically between Abrams and Zola, historically between Plato and postmodernism, intellectually between Aristotle and feminism, or geogrpahcally between Japanese Theory and Criticism and Caribbean, you can probably find it here.

One of the problems with a work from many hands, however, is the inevitable unevenness of the result. While some of the entries are superb (Richard Macksey on Longinus, Richard Shusterman on John Dewey and Richard Rorty, Martin Kreiswirth on Henry James), many are merely pedestrian (J. Douglas Kneale on Wordsworth), and a few are downright embarrassing (Vicki Mahaffey on Modernist Theory and Criticism).

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While some of the contributors bracingly point out the strengths as well as the problem areas within their subjects, too many function merely as cheerleaders (Jean-Michel Rabaté on Derrida and Barthes) or as nags (Walter Kalaidjian's grousing about Susan Sontag's insufficient attention to "the representation of gender, race, and class").

Furthermore, a work created by committee is almost guaranteed to be subjected to the by-now all too familiar compromises of contemporary academic consensus-building: the token affirmative action gestures to include as many representatives of sexual, social, and cultural fringe groups and minorities as possible; the obligatory coverage of certain "name" academics (in this case, Canadian and American ones) who themselves serve as advisors and consultants and whose good will needs to be secured for the project to go forward; and the general overemphasis on trendy movements, issues, and figures at the expense of those not currently hot. *The Johns Hopkins Guide* tells a reader as much about who's in and who's out on North American college campuses (and who's on the A-list and who's not at editorial board meetings) as it does about what will still matter in fifty or a hundred years. That explains some of the more eccentric editorial choices: the fact that space is devoted to extended, individual articles on Australian Theory and Criticism, M. H. Abrams, W. H. Auden, Canadian Theory and Criticism, Film Theory, Margaret Fuller, René Girard, Thomas Kuhn, Lesbian Theory and Criticism, J. Hillis Miller, Charles Sanders Peirce, Adrienne Rich, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Madame de Staël, Gertrude Stein, Virginia Woolf and Mary Wollstonecraft, but that there are no entries on Louis Althusser, Leo Bersani, Bertolt Brecht, Thomas De Quincy, Denis Donoghue, Terry Eagleton, Max Horkheimer, William James, Randall Jarrell, Frank Kermode, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Richard Poirier, Pragmatism, A. W. Schlegel, F. C. S. Schiller, John Searle, George Bernard Shaw, or Constantin Stanislavski. Who says academics aren't fashion conscious?

But these are quibbles. One more or less tendentious, rebarbative, or slipshod entry, or advisory board vote-buying inclusion or exclusion doesn't ultimately matter. What is most disturbing about *The Johns Hopkins Guide* is not its superficial eccentricity or its unevenness, but, at a deeper level, its frightening uniformity. Approximately half of the volume is devoted to twentieth-century critics and critical theories, and in entry after entry (with only the fewest of exceptions) there is a near unanimity of critical values, assumptions, and methods. Notwithstanding the lip-service paid to "diversity," "otherness," and "heterogeneity," and the unending genuflections in the direction of resisting "hegemonic" and "dominant" forms of discourse, it is clear that almost everyone (both

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those written about and those doing the writing) worships at the same church. The God of this congregation is named Marx; its saints are Nietzsche, Freud, and Saussure; its high priests are Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault; its ceremonies are called Marxism, structuralism, hermeneutics, deconstruction, and cultural studies; and its sacred words are ideology, gender, class, and race.

The conception of art that runs through the various articles is strikingly consistent. "Texts" are treated as being more or less direct emanations of the social "contexts" that surround them. The critic's job consists of explicating the work's historical, ideological, and sociological origins and consequences. Literary criticism, in effect, becomes indistinguishable from the body of exegetical practices we call the social sciences. (Practically speaking, it's not surprising that English department enrollments should decline under this dispensation, since their duties can just as well be performed by departments of history, sociology, economics, political science, psychology, and gender studies – as in some of our universities they obviously are being performed.)

There are at least two things wrong with this picture. First, it treats experience as if it could exist without individuals. It imagines it to be something in the air, something undergone by a group. It forgets that all experience is experienced by a particular person at one particular place, time, and state of awareness, and is therefore utterly personal and distinctive. Second, it similarly treats expression as if it were a general cultural product. It overlooks the absolute singularity of a literary text. It ignores the fact that it is something momentarily wrestled into existence – personally, precariously, irreplaceably. In a word, the structuralists, the formalists, the Marxists, the gender analysts, and the cultural studies types treat experience and expression as if they were impersonal, generic, and representative, as if a culture produced them the way it produces other commodities – cars or TV commercials – by means of a set of general rules and generalized practices disconnected from the eccentricity and specificity of individual feelings and visions. (In this respect, the Marxist critics of depersonalizing, despiritualizing "capitalistic commodification" are themselves ironically practitioners of techniques of "artistic commodification.") But, if there is one thing that literature itself shows us, it is that all of the most important experiences and most valuable expressions are absolutely personal and distinctive, or they are nothing. Their uniqueness makes for their preciousness.

These critics ignore the power of authors (and readers) to swerve away from – to creatively inflect – the structures of knowledge and understanding into which they are born. Under the ideological, "new historical," or cultural studies approaches, Shakespeare's writing is reduced to being a manifestation of Elizabethan structurings of power and

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knowledge, when in fact the wonder and importance of his work begin where such explanations of it end. Of course, some aspects of any piece of writing *are* socially and politically conditioned; but to the extent that it is a work of great art, it leaves these general determinants behind to go beyond them. But that "beyond" is precisely where these analyses are unable or unwilling to go. *The John Hopkins Guide* offers a truly ingenious series of attempts to account for literary events by means of impersonal, systematic, theoretical, and cultural explanations, but what is brought home to a reader over and over again is how the most interesting aspects of each of the literary works and artists dealt with slip through each successive interpretive net. The mystery, the eccentricity, the distinctiveness, the slipperiness of individual consciousness elude the sytematizations. That is why the cumulative effect of the volume is so depressing and mind-numbing. Amid all of the clever acts of contextualization, almost none of the articles comes within ten miles of what it actually feels like to write or read a poem, a novel, a play, a story. You have to put the book down and pick up a Wordsworth poem or a James short story to remind yourself why literary criticism exists in the first place. Reading and writing are far more complex and mysterious events than these theorists dream.

What is lost sight of is that literature is essentially a different way of knowing from the forms of knowing that philosophy, history, sociology, and cultural studies offer. Indeed, it might be argued that literature figures what will *not* be known in those ways. Sociological, historical, and philosophical knowledge is direct, clear, and abstract. It offers general truths and insights independent of personal points of view, sensory particularities, and emotional inflections. Literary knowledge, in contrast, is not final or ultimate, but emergent and shifting - continuously adjusted and revised. It bristles with prickly sensory particularity. It is anchored in particular spaces, times, and bodies. It is humanized and bent by voice tones and emotional overtones. It exists only in specific, local, unrepeatable forms: in the obliquities of particular words and the convolutions of specific syntactic shapes.

In fact, it might be argued that literary knowledge is not knowledge at all in the sociological, historical, or philosophical sense of the word – but something more like experience (since reading a novel is more like having an unusually complex and stimulating life experience than like encountering an argument in a sociology or philosophy text). While sociology, history, and philosophy bring clear and definite ideas into existence, literature seems devoted to the cultivation of what might be called unclear, uncertain, unresolved ideas. Literature frustrates the search for simple or general forms of understanding. It destabilizes meanings.

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When meaning does occur in literature, more often than not it is meaning pitted against meaning, new meaning moving away from old meaning.

I intend nothing terribly profound with the preceding observations. I am simply summarizing a few of the most basic qualities of literary experience. Yet, as astonishing as it may sound, one can read cover to cover in *The Johns Hopkins Guide* and find no acknowledgment of these obvious realities. (Off the top of my head, I can't remember a single reference in the entire volume to voice, tone, sensory effects, sound effects, emotions, the eccentricity of style, the uniqueness of authorial performances, the obliquities of syntax, or the time it takes to write or to read a book.) The overwhelming majority of the twentieth-century critics featured in the entries, as well as the critics writing them, treat literature (and the act of explicating it) as if a text could simply be translated into a series of historical or ideological generalizations – but fail to realize that, in that translation, almost everything that makes it literature is lost.

One of the critical positions that figures prominently in *The Johns Hopkins Guide,* the Derridean deconstructive stance, is an apparent exception to these comments, since Derrida and his followers obviously have a more complex view of language than most ideological critics do. Deconstructionists understand that language is less like a piece of glass through which underpinning historical, philosophical, or political structures can be viewed, than a colored lens that inevitably distorts and filters the little it allows us to see. But what links all of these critics together is that they all practice what Paul Ricoeur called the hermeneutics of suspicion. As different as they may be in other respects, the Marxists and the Derrideans, the feminists and the formalists, the new historians and the structuralists are all engaged in a fundamentally debunking project. They want to unmask the text, to demystify, to demythologize it. (With a utopianism touchingly American in its naiveté, many of them hope to break mankind free of literature's spells and seductions by revealing language's deceits.) They are skeptics, and their skepticism commits them to a strategy of unremitting textual resistance. They hold themselves outside of the text and fight its emotional blandishments. They resist its intellectual designs by executing their own counterdesigns upon it. They master it to prevent being mastered by it.

Ricoeur also had a name for the alternative position. He called it the hermeneutics of faith, taking his metaphor from the great tradition of biblical study and exegesis. In this tradition, rather than holding himself outside of the text and resisting its language by imposing his language upon it, the critic allows the text its own unique and alien way

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of speaking, and as hard as it may be, attempts to bring himself, through demanding intellectual and emotional discipline, into relationship with it. As the biblical resonances suggest, the hermeneutics of faith asks far more of the critic than the hermeneutics of suspicion does. The critic in quest of alien revelation cannot fly twenty thousand feet above or outside the text, superior to it, and unmoved by it, but must dive into it and make himself vulnerable to it, entering into an intimate encounter with a difficult and potentially disorienting experience. He must attempt the impossible: as much as he can, emptying himself out and giving up his own ways of understanding in order to allow the text to inhabit him and teach him entirely different forms of knowing. He must expose himself to the true otherness of genuinely foreign points of view and unfamiliar ways of seeing and feeling. He must risk becoming temporarily or permanently lost in a wilderness of unformulated experience.

All of that obviously requires of the critic not only personal humility, but specific practical skills – namely, the capacity to negotiate an incredibly complex verbal experience without taking refuge in inherited emotional or cognitive formulas of response – that are far from common even among "traditional" English department faculty. It is always easier and safer to be a skeptic. When you open yourself to profoundly new experiences, you put yourself at risk. When you let the text reach into you, you never know how deeply (or how far) it may move you.

There *are* twentieth-century critics who practice the hermeneutics of faith, but for obvious reasons they do not get as much attention as the other sort of critics. They are not system-builders. They are not generalizers. They do not make self-congratulatory, self-aggrandizing claims of having revealed literature's complicity with repressive social systems. They do not offer comforting, utopian prospects of escape from those systems through projects of literary and critical cleansing.

What such critics do offer in fact is not what most people want: an unending course of work, conducted through arduous acts of sustained attention, without the promise of grandiose ideological insights and sociological generalizations at the end of the road. The faithful critic does not demystify texts, but reveals their unfathomable mysteries. He or she does not show us the limitations of works of art, but returns us to an appreciation of the inexplicable wonder and boundless complexity of artistic consciousness. For all of these reasons, the discipline these critics practice is not now in fashion, never has been, and probably never will be. You will not find many of their names or more than a passing appreciation of their achievements in this volume.

RAY CARNEY

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A Poetic Conscience

SEEING THINGS. By Seamus Heaney. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $19.00.
SELECTED POEMS. By Seamus Heaney. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $30.00.

Seamus Heaney has long been praised for the textured "thingness" of his poetry. If poets have a ruling element, earth has been his. In 1976, after Heaney's fourth book, *North,* came out, Robert Fitzgerald noted that Heaney fulfills, as Yeats himself did not, Yeats's dictum in "The Municipal Gallery Revisited," that "All we did, all that we said or sung/ must come from contact with the soil." In "North," Heaney's poetic conscience, in the form of the "longship's swimming tongue," counseled him to "trust the feel of what nubbed treasure/ your hands have known." This image of "nubbed treasure" could stand for much of Heaney's poetry. His early work, from the farm and country poems of *Death of a Naturalist* and *Door into the Dark,* to the bog poems of *North,* was tactile in its preoccupations and its language. "Gleaning the unsaid off the palpable" ("The Harvest Bow," *Field Work*), has been one of the trademarks of Heaney's work. More than most, he has been capable of embodying linguistic sensuality, and the grounding of emotion in a vibrant object. Characteristically, in "Mossbawn," from *North,* love is expressed, and contained, in "a tinsmith's scoop/ sunk past its gleam/ in the meal-bin." Heaney's word sounds can chafe the tongue; the rawness heightens our pleasure. One feels one's mouth working to produce the closed, close, dense sounds, the encompassing soft vowels, the muscled, brawny, or sometimes sharp consonants. One needs to be limber to manage some of it.

With *Seeing Things,* Heaney's most recent book, a geological shift has occurred, as if the ground beneath his feet, and ours, had opened, and there is no ground, not even the bog, with its "bottomless wet centre." The poems no longer have the sense of being secreted and pulled up from the dark deep; neither, like the first poems, are they rough and abrading, stubbled, sandpapery. Instead, they flow. The language is freer, with an inner clarity, bright glints, sun glancing off water, the spirit forming and reforming in the current. The palpable has given way to the impalpable.

Whereas in "Song" (*Fieldwork*), Heaney wrote joyfully of "the moment when the bird sings very close/ To the music of what happens," in *Seeing Things* that moment has soured, and its music become a matter for regret: "And poetry/ Sluggish in the doldrums of what happens" ("Fosterling"). Instead, he looks for "what the reach/ Of sense despairs of as it fails to reach it,/ Especially the thwarted sense of touch" ("A

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Basket of Chestnuts"). Touch, once a characteristic response and imaginative gesture of Heaney's, is now at cross-purposes with his endeavor; it is "thwarted" by being out of its element. Now he savors "A farewell to surefootedness, a pitch/ Beyond our usual hold upon ourselves" ("Squarings, xxxviii"). This is a poetry that is "against . . . all emulation of stone-cut verses" (Squarings, xxxviii") and self-consciously finds even that formulation too self-conscious, too pumped-up. This is a purposefully playful poetry that "lifts its eyes and clears its throat" ("The Biretta") at its own imaginings, here an overturned clergyman's hat becoming a boat.

In *Seeing Things* these moments of transformation are mostly written on water. Images of fishing, boating, streams, rivers, boats, and the sea abound. Stonework (as opposed to "stone-cut verses") carved to represent flowing water – the element most mutable figured in the material most obdurate – is praised for the transformation of its nature: "Lines/ Hard and thin and sinuous represent/ The flowing river . . . ./ . . ./ And yet in that utter visibility/ The stone's alive with what's invisible" ("Seeing Things"). Water, what's invisible, not earth, where things are encoded and tactile, is the governing element and image of *Seeing Things;* the imagination, its ability to re-invent reality, is its ruler.

The struggle between the imagination and the claims made upon it by politics and religion has been one of Heaney's driving themes since *Wintering Out,* when, in "Midnight," he wrote regarding Northern Ireland, "The tongue's/ Leashed in my throat." But in the more recent books, *Station Island* especially, the quarrel has grown dramatically, as Heaney has ventured toward an at first uneasy acceptance of his "free state of image and allusion" ("Sandstone Keepsake").

Heaney's process of defining his role as a humane person, as a Catholic, and as a poet, in the politically violent, religiously charged atmosphere of Northern Ireland has been arduous and wrenching. He has written about it in the most personal of terms ("The Toome Road," "The Strand at Lough Beg," among other poems) and castigated himself for his personal and poetic handling of the situation – especially for evading it ("Punishment," "Singing School: 4. Summer 1969, 6. Exposure," "Station Island vii") or handling it falsely (Station Island viii"). In section viii of "Station Island" Heaney has his cousin, for whom "The Strand at Lough Beg" was written, lash into him for that elegy:

> 'You confused evasion and artistic tact.
> The Protestant who shot me through the head
> I accuse directly, but indirectly, you

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> who now atone perhaps upon this bed
> for the way you whitewashed ugliness and drew
> the lovely blinds of the *Purgatorio*
> and saccharined my death with morning dew.'

Heaney has written as if being a writer, let alone a successful Irish writer writing in English, is tantamount to being a deserter, not least because one's allegiance is necessarily to the "country of the mind" and a larger non-partisan community.

But Heaney has movingly explored the problem of the poet's need to be faithful to and protective of his inner freedom in the essays collected in *The Government of the Tongue*. There he decisively defends the "imagination as a shaping spirit which it is wrong to disobey." "Station Island" itself is a pilgrimage to this conclusion, with Heaney continually facing the wrong way or blocking the other, traditional, pilgrims, as he is stopped by his own private station masters. It is, famously, Joyce, whom he has tell him that "You may lose more of yourself than you redeem/ doing the decent thing"; since *Station Island* Heaney has steered away from the shoals of political engagement. He also seems finished, for the time being, with his long mining of the tribal properties of language.

But if Joyce gave him his push, the examples of the Eastern Europeans, Milosz, Herbert, Holub, and Popa especially, all of whom he wrote about in *The Government of the Tongue,* gave him the navigational chart he used in much of his next book of poems, *The Haw Lantern,* written at roughly the same time as *The Government of the Tongue*. Some of the uncharacteristic strategies he borrows are allegory and parable, the indicative mood, the use of abstract words, a temperate, even tone. Although "Parable Island," "From the Republic of Conscience," "From the Land of the Unspoken," "A Shooting Script," and "From the Canton of Expectation" may be successful by their own lights, with their dispassionate lack of affect they hardly bear comparison to the full-bodied, full-throated, full-hearted poems of Heaney's which preceded them.

Instead, I find the route to *Seeing Things* in "Clearances," the sonnet sequence for Heaney's mother, which seems to me the heart of *The Haw Lantern,* and in "The Placeless Heaven: Another Look at Kavanaugh," the first essay in *The Government of the Tongue*. Both "Clearances" and "The Placeless Heaven" contain an anecdote which becomes a metaphor for Heaney's (and Kavanaugh's) poetic. Heaney's aunt had planted a chestnut the year of his birth; the tree became associated, in his mind as in others, with himself: "the chestnut was the one significant thing that grew as I grew." Sometime after his family moved from that house, new owners cut down the tree. In "Clearances," written after his mother's

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death, the chestnut, or the place where the chestnut had been, becomes a metaphor for the powerful presence of what is absent – "A space/ Utterly empty, utterly a source" – by implication, his mother's still powerful presence in his interior life, despite her death.

In "A Placeless Heaven," Heaney tells the story of the chestnut, and concludes:

> In my mind's eye I saw it as a kind of luminous
> emptiness, a warp and waver of light, and once
> again . . . I began to identify with that space
> just as years before I had identified with the young tree.
> . . . The new place was all idea, if you like;
> it was generated out of my experience of the old
> place but it was not a topographical location. It
> was and remains an imagined realm, even if it can
> be located at an earthly spot, a placeless heaven
> rather than a heavenly place.

About Kavanaugh and his earlier 'misreading' of him, he notes:

> I still assumed Kavanaugh to be writing about the tree which was actually in the ground when he had in fact passed to write about the tree which he held in mind.

With *Seeing Things,* Heaney has passed almost wholly from writing about the "tree in the ground," to writing about the tree which he holds in mind. Before, Heaney used objects to contain and ballast his flights of fancy, his linguistic escapades. The objects were the inspiration; now inspiration – imagination, memory – is the object he examines. The title of the book is apt. The process of seeing – both visually and with understanding – and not the things themselves, is the focus of the poems. The colloquial meaning – seeing what is not there – is carried off with aplomb.

For the most part, the poems in *Seeing Things* are not attempts to recreate experiences, situations, feelings, or objects from the inside, thereby plunging the reader into the linguistic equivalent of sensory virtual reality. Instead, Heaney ruminates, reflects, recollects from a distance in time, so that the poems, on their surfaces also, have a gap of consciousness between the moment of writing and the original experience.

The difference can be seen in "Glanmore Revisited." In the original "Glanmore Sonnets" (*Field Work*), the stance of most of the poems is that they were written at or just after the moment the sonnet describes. The present tense of the poem and its subject overlap. "Come to me

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quick. I am upstairs shaking" we read, feeling that concurrent with writing it Heaney did indeed call downstairs. In "Glanmore Revisited," the poet revisits both the place and the time written about earlier; the tone is predominantly one of remembrance: "It felt remembered even then." His image of memory as the almost tamed bedroom ivy could stand for the poem (perhaps the book) as a whole:

> And little shoots of ivy creeping in
> Unless you've trained them out – like memories
> You've trained so long now they can show their face
> And keep their distance.

Throughout *Seeing Things,* especially in the second part, "Squarings," Heaney squares up against his past poetics, "re-envisaging" his material in a more relaxed way, going for something elusive he feels he missed, or neglected, before:

> Re-enter this as the adult of solitude,
> The silence forder and the definite
> Presence you sensed withdrawing the first time around.

In the phrase "silence forder" it is tempting to find an allusion to and contrast with the one who burrowed so long in "the word hoard."

The sense of refinding and re-invigorating a lost self is strong in *Seeing Things*. It is the self who, as he writes in "Fosterling," can "credit marvels." It is the self who, after long instruction, has learned:

> . . . whatever is given
> Can always be re-imagined, however four-square
> Plank-thick, hull-stupid and out of its time
> It happens to be. You are as free as the lookout,
>
> That far-seeing joker posted high over the fog,
> Who declared by the time that he had got himself down
> The actual ship had been stolen away beneath him.
> (from "The Settle Bed")

As in Blake's couplet, "If the sun and moon should doubt/ They'd immediately go out," belief is all. Fortunately, while he's posted high "over the fog," like his "far-seeking joker" lookout, the actual ship of Heaney's poetic gift is very much supporting him, carrying him over the waters.

CAROL MOLDAW

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Facing the Future

NEVER STOP RUNNING: ALLARD LOWENSTEIN AND THE STRUGGLE TO SAVE AMERICAN LIBERALISM. By William H. Chafe. Basic Books. $28.00.

Reading about the late Allard Lowenstein, in this superb biography by Duke University historian William Chafe, reminded me of a definition Theodore Roosevelt once gave when asked to explain what he meant when he called himself a Progressive. "A progressive," Roosevelt told his inquisitor, "is a conservative who resolutely sets his face towards the future." Allard Lowenstein was the last of the old Cold War liberals, a man who sought to wage a crusade to save a floundering liberalism. But in the sense that T.R. meant it, it is clear that Lowenstein was well within the American mainstream, a conservative who sought incremental reform and who was as bitterly opposed to those who sought to ditch the democratic system for either Communism or Fascism as he was in favor of forthright action to end segregation at home and to push U.S. opposition to the *apartheid* regime in South Africa.

But who was Allard Lowenstein? Unless one was active in the 1960s, his is no longer a household name. Today's students, knowledgeable about Martin Luther King Jr., Robert Kennedy, and Lyndon Johnson, would be hard-pressed to include him in the pantheon of important Amerians of that era. And yet, as Chafe proves in this book, Lowenstein was perhaps the major player in a period of turmoil and change in the American political arena. In three key areas, his dynamism and inspiration provided the steam and the wherewithal for the creation of social movements that began to change the political landscape. Lowenstein was perhaps the first white American to focus his attention on the oppressive situation existing in South Africa. In 1959, he traveled there and became involved in a dangerous and clandestine mission to help Hans Beukes, a South-West African student, escape the country and testify to the United Nations about *apartheid*. Secondly, Lowenstein's commitment to civil rights at home led him to build a student movement against segregation, and it was his efforts and ideas that led to the famous Freedom Summer of 1964, in which scores of white Northern students descended on Mississippi to help Southern black activists in the early Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) register the local disenfranchised black population to vote. Finally, Lowenstein's most memorable accomplishment, for which he was rightfully best known, was the creation of the "dump Johnson" movement in 1968. An opponent of the Vietnam War, Lowenstein accomplished what Chafe calls "one of the

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most remarkable political achievements of contemporary American history," a movement within Democratic ranks to defeat a sitting President who expected a clear sail toward renomination.

There have been other, highly unsatisfactory, books about Lowenstein, including memoirs by some of his protégés, such as David Harris, and one scandalous attack by lawyer and actor Richard Cummings, which took off on the Old Left charge that Lowenstein was a paid CIA agent. But finally Lowenstein has a biographer his life deserves. William Chafe has combed all the sources, including Lowenstein's personal diary and his vast collection of correspondence, and he has interviewed virtually every one of his old political associates and personal friends. The result is a textured and magnificent study that succeeds not only as political history but also as a deeply felt personal portrait of the unknown and insecure man behind the bravado.

William Chafe's examination of this one liberal activist's personal and political life points the way toward an examination of American liberalism in the 1960s and provides a mechanism to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses. What was unique about Allard Lowenstein was that just as he sought to have America live up to its promises, he worked equally as hard to contest and oppose those who linked themselves to liberal causes only to gain cadre for their own attempts at the creation of a revolutionary movement, one that would oppose the entire system rather than work for catharsis. This seems at times to disturb his biographer, who writes that in contrast to liberals who saw the Bill of Rights as indivisible, some like Lowenstein "felt that the Communist menace was both real and pernicious, that Communism itself had to be fought at every turn," and hence if one defended civil liberties, one had to acknowledge "how evil the left was."

From the standpoint of the 1990s, one might ask whether Lowenstein's experience confirms rather than denies his clear centrist stance. Communism, after all, was indeed evil and pernicious, and certainly it was possible to defend the political rights of Communists while strongly opposing their secretive political agenda. This, of course, is what Lowenstein did with a passion. Because a thug like Joe McCarthy used the Communist issue to sully the political landscape, certainly it did not mean that the correct response was to ignore the issue and act as if Communist attempts to create a Popular Front were worthwhile. Indeed, so strong was Lowenstein's commitment to opposing the hard left that at a critical point he abandoned the Freedom Summer effort, over the issue of Communist infiltration into the civil rights movement, just as the effort took off.

What frustrated Lowestein were two things: the slow and ponderous decision-making process within the SNCC, whose most prominent lead-

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ers, especially the dedicated and charismatic Bob Moses, eschewed strong leadership and favored consensus politics; combined with the decision of SNCC leaders to seek representation from the National Lawyers Guild, at that time the American Communist Party's main legal front. Lowenstein had devoted months to organizing Freedom Summer, touring the campuses and signing up recruits to travel to Missippi. He had, as Chafe writes, "mobilized the white foot soldiers who generated the publicity and national outrage that made success possible in Mississippi." Yet his warnings about the pitfalls of Communist participation were ignored by SNCC's leadership. Lowenstein then broke with Freedom Summer, even fighting to deprive SNCC of needed financial support from New York liberal circles. Chafe thinks that it was wrong of him to "want to control their activism, instead of joining their ranks as part of a larger collective process." But his decision, as Chafe makes quite clear, was not based on personal hurt, but on his insistence that change be achieved "*within* the existing political system" rather than, as some of the hot-heated youngsters in SNCC thought, to "wage war on the existing structure of authority." To young Southern blacks, naive about politics, the friendship of Communists was something they did not think twice about accepting. To Lowenstein, who understood quite well the history of Communist subversion of liberal movements, the friendship was the kiss of death. When Old Left cadre combined with New Left romanticists, Lowenstein saw the future and understood correctly that it had little to do with realizing the promise of American democracy. Hence, when SNCC leaders rejected the famous Atlantic City 1964 Democratic Convention compromise, in which Freedom Democratic Party activists were given seats in the formerly all-white Mississippi delegation, Lowenstein tried to point out to them that the compromise was *not* a sellout by white liberals. Rather, it was proof to him of "the vitality of American democracy," since Johnson was forced to compromise, and the future promised that the Democratic Party in the old South would no longer be segregated. Again, Lowenstein was proved correct, and those in SNCC who used this compromise as an excuse to cast out whites and to adopt black nationalism and separatism, along with revolutionary violence, were the ones who made the wrong choice. And although Chafe does not discuss this aspect of the event, Lowenstein was most likely more than aware of the behind-the-scenes activity of American Communists and fellow-travellers, who used the Mississippi Free Democratic Party crisis as an excuse to drive a wedge between the young civil rights activist and the old anti-Communist liberals such as Walter Reuther, Bayard Rustin, and their supporters.

Rather than reconcile and hold his tongue, Lowenstein took the

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difficult and principled route – although it separated him from the very movement he had helped to build. If not for Vietnam, it is perhaps doubtful that Lowenstein would have been able to reconnect with the young and to touch the current of protest that emerged from the nation's campuses. Not only did Lowenstein oppose the war, but as Chafe puts it, as a candidate for Congress, he made "political opposition to the war – and the president – the *raison d'être* of his life." Lowenstein saw the Vietnam war as a betrayal of the best of America's traditions and our involvement there as a foreign policy that was bound to fail, since escalation of military involvement produced only more discord and alienation at home. But unlike the radicals, who denounced the war in absolutist terms, and who sanctioned extra-parliamentary actions and eventually illegal and violent forms of protest, Lowenstein insisted on working through the system and giving it a chance. As much as he detested LBJ's escalation and chicanery, he could write, in a letter to the New Left, that "the police are not Fascist pigs. America is not a racist, imperialist society. Lyndon Johnson is not John Kennedy. Hate is not love. And no, I am not an agent of the CIA."

Lowenstein sought to get the Democratic Party to replace LBJ with a committed antiwar candidate. His own work to find a candidate led to the Eugene McCarthy candidacy, and eventually, his behind-the-scenes involvement with and support of Robert F. Kennedy led to his decision to also enter the race as an antiwar candidate. But throughout this period, Lowenstein, unlike even some other moderates, never supported unilateral withdrawal from Vietnam, or even Kennedy's favored solution, a "coalition government" in South Vietnam with the Vietcong. Strangely, Chafe neglects to point out that in various speeches, Lowenstein consistently opted for the solution of a monitored free election in South Vietnam, in which all political forces, including the Vietcong, could freely run candidates. But he was certain that given such a choice, the Vietnamese in the South would vote for a non-Communist and pro-Western regime. Calling for a Vietcong victory, or unilateral withdrawal, and engaging in acts of violence, from shouting down speakers to planting bombs, Lowenstein argued, only reinforced the neanderthal right wing and harmed opposition to the war.

Yet while Lowenstein worked against the extremes, his own efforts pushed the Democratic Party unalterably to the left and to the adoption of positions in the future that, had he lived, he clearly would have been opposed to. Moreover, as time passed, his own commitment moved towards the far liberal wing of the Democratic Party, and he had little to say about the problems inherent in Great Society liberalism, the proliferation of the welfare state, the growth of the underclass, and the

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abandonment of civil rights for a policy of support to unbridled affirmative action. The same Tom Hayden who at the time condemned Lowenstein as a "professional, CIA-oriented politician" came to have the kind of strength within the Democratic Party that Lowenstein never had – a clear indication of its shift towards the left.

Lowenstein's own life, we learn from Chafe, was a bundle of contradictions. Ever on the run, amassing scores of young male followers – handsome and from WASP backgrounds – Lowenstein fought personal insecurity by avoiding intimate relationships. In conflict with his own obvious Jewishness, a theme Chafe begins but abruptly drops, he sought personal support from preppy, Ivy League young men. Wary of settling down into marriage and family, he eventually did so. Clearly, his marriage to the Boston Brahmin Jennifer Lyman was undertaken because he knew it was expected of him – it was part of the price of being a political figure. But as Chafe uncovers and handles sensitively, Lowenstein was most likely a repressed homosexual. Chafe suggests that before his death, Lowenstein was on the verge of involving himself in the early gay rights movement. All this however, is speculation, because of Lowenstein's untimely death in 1980 – at the hand of Dennis Sweeney (a former protegé turned schizophrenic), who walked into Lowenstein's office and shot and killed him.

Chafe also suggests that Lowenstein was on the verge of playing a "second act," a rebirth in which – despite three defeats at runs for a Congressional seal and continued political isolation – his involvement with the gay issue, combined with the end of his marriage, might have propelled him once again to political limelight and leadership. The evidence, I think, is dubious. For one thing, Lowenstein had put his eggs in Ted Kennedy's basket and even spent a good few last years of his life propagating conspiracy theories about the intersections of the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, Jr. He had become something of a conspiracy nut – a premature Oliver Stone. Moreover, there is little indication tht Lowenstein would have been at home politically in a period of resurgent conservatism, in which the Democratic Party rose to political success only when it moved away from the Kennedy wing and towards the center. Indeed, Chafe himself tells us how during one of Lowenstein's Congressional campaigns, he was unable to relate to the average lower-middle-class ethnic voters in Brooklyn and Long Island. His heart was in Vietnam or South Africa, not in the daily lives of the people whom he sought to represent.

Allard Lowenstein emerges from William Chafe's book as the last representative of the old New Deal-Fair Deal liberalism, a man born at just the right time to be able to hook into the sentiments emerging from a new college generation, one that was on the verge of breaking

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apart the old labor-liberal coalition that produced the New Deal and on the path of producing what became the disastrous New Politics and the McGovernization of the Democratic Party. He took up their themes, responded to what outraged them – especially Vietnam – while always trying to steer a centrist course and move the nation towards reconciliation and unity. When the Movement became too radical, he could and did break abruptly with it, even if it meant gaining the animosity of the very young men and women he worked hard to recruit. Allard Lowenstein was a man of principle and a born leader. He won the respect of both friends and adversaries. Students of American politics owe William Chafe a great debt for uncovering the story of his tortured and complicated life and for telling it so well.

RONALD RADOSH

The Other Europe

CHILD OF EUROPE: A NEW ANTHOLOGY OF EAST EUROPEAN POETRY. Edited by Michael March. Penguin Books. $9.95.
CLAY AND STAR: CONTEMPORARY BULGARIAN POETS. Translated and edited by Lisa Sapinkopf and Georgi Belev. Introduction by Charles A. Moser. Milkweed Editions. $15.00.
CZECH AND SLOVAK WRITING IN TRANSLATION. Edited by Mila Sasková-Pierce, Hana Arie-Gaifman, et. al. *Prairie Schooner,* Winter 1992. $6.45.
THE HORSE HAS SIX LEGS: AN ANTHOLOGY OF SERBIAN POETRY. Edited and translated by Charles Simic. Graywolf Press. $12.00.
SELECTED POEMS OF SANDOR CSOORI. By Sándor Csoóri. Translated by Len Roberts. Copper Canyon Press. $11.00.

The Cold War is supposedly over. The bad news is that Europe is once again rife with racism and virulent nationalism; the good news is that East European poetry is alive and well. These five titles reassert values both topical and timeless. *Child of Europe* looks like a tiny offering, but it is a wealth *in nuce,* featuring new poetry from eleven countries, from Hungary to the Baltics, not neglecting the former Soviet Union, by thirty-five poets born between 1940 and 1963. First published in 1990, the volume maintains a view of old political borders intact. Among the opening poems is György Petri's stunning political allegory "Electra," in which we hear hidden self-irony: "Because of disgust, because it all sticks in my craw,/ revenge has become my dream and my daily bread" – for

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Electra's mother's murder of her father, "who murdered his own daughter!" Politics are balanced by poetics in action in Tibor Zalán's tight free-verse medium ("The Wind The Night The Endless Snowfall"). From Poland, we have the evocation of place by Bronislaw Maj ("Evening at Kraków Central Station"); the sharp minimalism of Ryszard Krynicki; and the somewhat repetitive, Vasko Popa-like, lyrical miniaturism of Tomasz Jastrun. Among East Germans we glimpse the historical awareness of Lutz Rathenow ("Prague," "To the Poet Franz Kafka"), the concern with Aristotelian poetics shown by Steffen Mensching ("In a Hotel Room in Meissen I Read"), and the optical illusionism of Kurt Drawert ("Mirror Symmetry," "For Frank O'Hara"). Each poet strives for the hard-earned image and for direct, non-metaphoric writing, although not many attain the precision and graphic vividness of Hungarian Zsuzsa Rakovszky: "A sunbathing woman . . ./ . . . , turbans her head with a towel/ and, her cheek sucked in, investigates/ her face in a pocket mirror" ("Summer Solstice").

From Romania come samples of the nervous eloquence of Liviu Ioan Stoiciu ("In Windy Twilight," "From the Tower Watching," "Resurrection"), as well as of Elena Stefoi's searching, dry voice between wilderness and philosophy ("Love Poem As It May Come Off"). In Stefoi's "This Year in the Month of March" there is knowledge of history as the suspended present, a look at "the political map of the world," on which "creatures of all sorts/ do their own thing in the sarcastic ruins/ of memory." We find this order of awareness also in the work of the Slovenian Ales Debeljak, in poems from his *Forms of Love* and *Outline of History* cycles. Among Bulgarians are Lyubomir Nikolov, with his startling imagery and craft ("Aladzha Monastery," "The Valley"), and the thoughtful and darkly whimsical Boyko Lambovski ("Marina," "As the Pencil Dances Over the Paper"). In the latter, we read: "Thus a child pulls off/ a doll's head/ and from curiosity rips off/ a tank's turret," wondering where make-believe stops and reality takes over. Notable are the poetic realism and metaphoric writing of Ivo Smoldas, a Moravian ("Hour of the Wolf," "The Flash"). The Soviet section is most unusual (few East European poetry anthologies include one). In it, Aleksei Parshchikov gives us "August on the Dnepr" and "Mudflats," both in beautiful stanzaic control. From Viktor Krivulin there is an all too brief selection from the cycle *Poems on Maps* and, unforgettably, "Flight to Egypt." Here the poet finds "in april quattrocento air" "a family fleeing beyond the frame." Then from mythical Egypt we are transported to the gallery, where we find ourselves "in front of a shadowy picture," "at the start/ of an unapparent path." Viewer and poet come full circle.

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Michael March is a noticeably nonpolitical editor, but, by contrast, the introduction to *Clay and Star* by Charles A. Moser is entitled "A Few Words on Poetry and Politics." I find few political poems here, although it can, of course, be said that a good lyrical poem is itself a political act. The twenty-seven poets this volume represents, born between 1919 and 1960, are "political" largely in this sense. Notable among works by the older poets are the witty epigrams of Radoi Ralin ("Safety Pins"), the eloquent and precise language of Ivan Davidkov ("Returning from the Fair," "Villages Like Ghosts"), and the ancient-city poetry of Ivan Teofilov ("The Hills," "Ortamezar – the Jewish Quarter"). Of Plovdiv, one of the oldest cities in the Balkans, Teofilov writes: "Your ancient tiers climb among the stars,/ small blue donkeys graze the silence,/ a Roman street twists down among the wedding candles" ("The Old City"). The best poets of the second generation include Ivan Tsanev, whose language is tightly-packed and intense ("Express Train," "Bee"), and the subjective and excellent Boris Hristov ("Solitary Man," "Dandelion Bone"). Two women poets of the third generation stand out: Miriana Basheva, with her tight, clear quatrains ("Untitled," "It Was War"), and Fedya Filkova, with her appealing minimalist lyrics ("Under a Wing," "Buchenwald"). In the latter, "Retribution keeps watch this summer day/ and smiles with a hollyhock's innocence." This young poet makes us think.

Few of these poets attempt directly political rhetoric, but three who do are Ivan Radoev ("Ballad for Dialectical Materialism"), Stefan Tsanev ("Rehearsal for a Parade"), and Rumen Leonidov ("Misery"). Their works give us pause to consider how difficult it is to write a good political poem. One of the big surprises of *Clay and Star* is the instructive contrast between the successfully political Lyubomir Levchev and his equally successful nonpolitical son, Vladimir. In the former's vision, Marx could almost be Confucius; in the following lines (from "Rooftops") we overhear Pound's *Cantos:* "the superstructure/ (as Marx would say)/ mustn't crush the base./ And we – who write –/ we must create something very true,/ realistic,/ sunny,/ and resilient . . . ." This is precisely what the son, Vladimir, has tried to do in another mode. In two different sections of "Four Seekers of the Great Metaphor" we read: "He understood that words are living beings./ He dwelled among them . . ." but also: "He rejected empty words. He loved the fullness/ of wine glasses, women's breasts, town squares." I find it more difficult to believe in the voices of Ekaterina Iosifova, Georgi Belev, and Danila Stoyanova. Their lack of intensity, tightness, and compelling imagery is replaced with a not unwelcome childlike naïveté as in the work of Danila Stoyanova. She is the youngest of these poets. Tragically, she died in 1983, aged

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twenty-three.

It is good to hear from poets of the former Czechoslovakia and with *Czech and Slovak Writing in Translation,* the editors of *Prairie Schooner* perform a real service. The offerings in this selection suggest both closeness and distance. The centerpiece of the issue is the work of Sylva Fischerová, some of whose poems here are deep excavations of the self: "Drinking Coffee," "Necessary," "The Stones Speak Czech," and "Black Tiger." "Necessary" resonates with the mythical music of Robinson Jeffers: "Our women lay fallow,/ we did what was necessary/ and we waited." Both the Prague Spring and the sudden transitions of the Velvet Revolution play into Fischerová's sensibility; in this she displays affinity with Jana Stroblová (featured in *Child of Europe*). Fischerová states that her favorite poet is Hölderlin. This speaks for her perceptions and makes one want to read more of her work.

Among other outstanding Czech poets in the *Prairie Schooner* selection are Zdenek Vanícek (translated by the distinguished Ewald Osers), with his credo-like repudiation of Heraclitus ("I Don't Believe"); Karel Siktanc, with poetry from the cycle *Dance of Death;* and the youngest of the ten poets, Magda Bartosová, born in 1972, with her poem "And That Is Why . . . ." Controlled hilarity characterizes this quasi-prose dance of life. The poet wants her fellow citizens to be "worthy of winter": "Even now, the snow still falls, but we are not nine any more./ And even if we dance from time to time in the mountains, . . ./ . . . we are bashful of doing it in public./ And that's why we're not worthy of winter."

Slovak poetry is unfortunately a neglected field. The *Prairie Schooner* compilation includes Margita Dobrovicová ("For Emily Dickinson"); Daniela Blazeková ("Sun Sutra" – evoking Allen Ginsberg's "Sunflower Sutra"); Erich Groch, with a poetry of awful secrets; Vlado Puchala; and Milan Richter. In Groch's eight poems we hear joy wrought with irony ("All Sun, from Light to Light"), see Magritte turned inside-out ("A White Dove . . . ," "Friend to Birds"), and learn a grammar of shapes and colors evoking Chagall ("There Are Some Important"). Not last, Richter's poetry ("Hope," "Light?") commends a major voice to our attention. "Hope" chronicles mentalities that made the concentration camps possible; in "Light?" we see light that amounts to darkness: "Oh the light in the furnaces of crematoria,/ the light of lamps on interrogators' desks,/ the light over Nagasaki," and yet: "*Mehr Licht/* is thought to have been Goethe's order/ to his servant/ to open the window wide."

The Horse Has Six Legs highlights another national poetry scene of generally high accomplishment. In it Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Charles

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Simic, also a first-class solo translator, gathers traditional folk songs and the work of eighteen Serbian poets born between 1894 and 1957. Simic is intelligently eclectic: "I translated only what I liked, and kept only what I felt I did justice to," he states in his Introduction. His guidelines yield a great deal. Serbian poetry's most important era immediately follows World War II, during which time all but the first two poets included in his anthology were active. Those born before 1935 count among their ranks such major figures as Vasko Popa (1922 - 1991), winner of the Austrian State Prize for Literature; Branko Miljkovic (1934 - 1960), and Ivan V. Lalic (b. 1931). The volume also contains surprises and shows a unity in variety matched only by *Clay and Star.*

Serbia is a vast place of poetry and song, which Simic makes us understand by leading off with anonymous oral poetry and with women's songs. Among these "Brotherless Sisters," "A Girl Threw an Apple. . . ," and "Wind Blows, . . ." are particularly appealing. Among the lettered moderns we come upon "The String" by Momcilo Nastasijevic; from *"When the Poet . . . "* by Rade Drainac; and "Bloody Fable" by Desanka Maksimovic. Aleksandar Vuco's passage from *Cyril and Methodius* depicts a hard-earned sainthood; and Branko Miljkovic is a master of tight, passionate utterance. Let me quote in full his *ars poetica* "Sea without Poets":

> You wait for a right moment
> To attune yourself to words
> But there is no such poet
> Nor a word fully free
> O bitter and blind sea
> In love with shipwreck

As are we all. Miljkovic's "Everyone Will Write Poetry" is also well worth comparing with Matija Beckovic's "No One Will Write Poetry."

In the center of Simic's book we find, back to back, two top poets. Jovan Hristic, in "That Night They All Gathered on the Highest Tower," reports: "That night they all gathered on the highest tower:/ Astronomers, mathematicians, and one of the magi from Syria/ To read in the stars the glory of the King of Kings,/ And demonstrate his immortality with the aid of geometry." Ljubomir Simovic's "Notation in Gold" and "Crucifixion" answer to this order of cosmic awareness, and so do "The Law" and "About Death and Other Things," by Aleksandar Ristovic. "If I Knew I'd Bear Myself Proudly," by Matija Beckovic, is a brave political self-interview. Among larger forms in the volume are from *Opus 11* by Rade Drainac; from *Holy Mass for Relja Krilatica* by Milorad

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Pavic (although one wonders what makes this a "Mass"); and "Horoscope," by Rasa Livada. *The Horse Has Six Legs* closes with such strong poems as "Florence" and "A Poem with a Tilde in the Title," by Nina Zivancevic, a poet not yet forty.

Finally, there is the serviceable to fine selection of the work of a single poet, Sándor Csoóri (b. 1930), described in the *Selected Poems* as "the leading Hungarian poet of the post-World War II generation." Csoóri is both a poet and Hungarian to the roots of his being. Csoóri's work is informed by both love of country and deep shame, to the point of indignation and occasional cynicism, in the face of a receding but still recent past. Len Roberts, whether in tandem with others or solo, does for the most part a credible job rendering a peculiar blend of the soft and the hard, the lyrical and the disenchanted. This does not mean that his work is flawless. In "Prophecy," for example, "their fall" should be "the Collapse," a reactionary name for the end of World War II in Hungary (the official name having been "the Liberation").

The seventy-six poems in this selection are divided into three parts, arranged in reverse chronological order and subtitled "(1982-present)," "(1973-1982)," and "(1962-1973)." "My Masters," which opens the volume, is a poetic and ethical manifesto: "Where, where are my masters?/ In the past they'd appear without even being called./ . . ./ . . . ; they'd come from the night's marshes,/ holding Hungary's broken peony in their hands." Come they do, for "Night Journey in Germany," "Farewell to Finland," "You, Hungry for the Sun," and "The Wood Embers Cast Light upon the Snow Outside" attest to their presence. Everywhere in his poetry, nature and memory silently conspire. There is an affecting poem in memory of a friend, the political philosopher István Bibó ("I Saw Your Face"), and a hard, demythologizing song in homage to Béla Bartók ("Cantata Profana"). Csoóri's allegiances are to his land and people; among his poetic debts, as the Introduction states, are Eluard, Garcia Lorca, and Reverdy – surrealists and explorers of the image. These loyalties and traditions determine the very timbre of Csoóri's voice.

Our lack of access to Eastern Europe has not yet been fully relieved, least of all to its letters. If the region has "opened up" politically, linguistically it remains closed to most. As few writing in English have mastery of such languages as Latvian and Romanian, good translations of poetry will always be needed. These five offerings are signposts to riches still hidden behind the golden curtain of inaccessibility.

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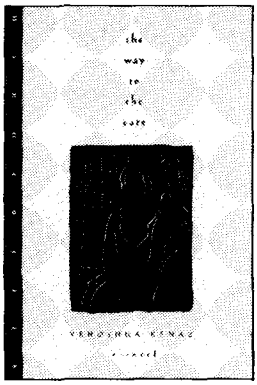

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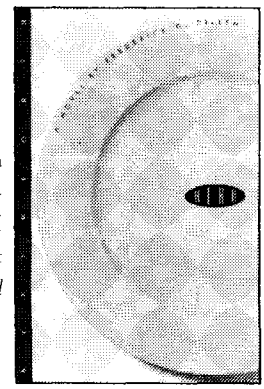

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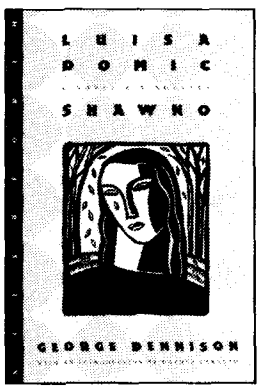

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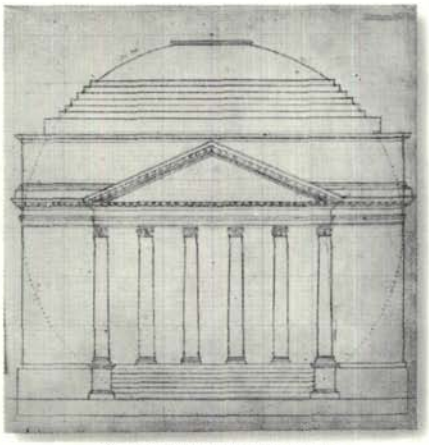

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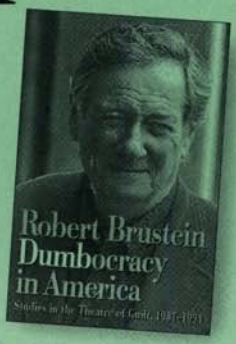

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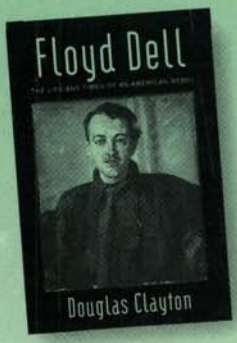

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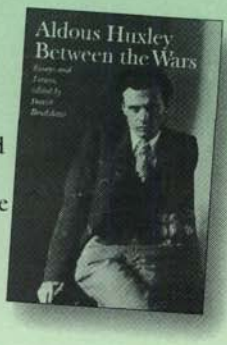

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